New Statesman

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NS poetry award

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Peter Kellner: TV's election war

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New Statesman

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New Statesman Vol 106 No 2736 26 August 1983

Politics of the workhouse

NO ONE CAN say that the electorate was not warned about the hidden agenda behind the last Tory election manifesto. The now steady series of leaks about the major public spending cuts operation that has been under way during the summer is beginning to reveal it in detail. The latest is that the government wants to cut dole payments to those in need who continue to live with their parents. This will no doubt shock the 750,000 or so in this position. But it is the inevitable consequence of policies that have been steadily pursued by this government over the last five years and in which it chose to glory on 9 June.

The logic is simple enough. This government accepted an economic theory (for which there was and is not a shred of empirical evidence) that economic recovery depends on less central government borrowing. Having adopted policies that make the recession worse, the government unsurprisingly found that its revenues are lower and its spending higher than expected. Any rational government at that point would re-examine its policies. But this government seems to want to make a virtue of plunging on regardless.

Since it is committed as well to reducing taxes on those still in a position to pay them and since the economy is still scarcely growing, if it is to square its self-chosen vicious circle, it will need to cut the real value of whole chunks of its spending – such as dole payments to young men and women who cannot find a job and continue to live with their parents.

This is all the economics of the madhouse. The policies which the government has deployed since it came to office in 1979 have proved completely ineffective in restoring the British economy. The plain fact is that there has been no economic recovery and there will be no economic recovery until the policies are changed. Mrs Thatcher and her ministers clutch regularly at straws, like minor improvements in the monthly economic indicators. They pray for a continuing slow-down in the rate of growth of underlying unemployment. But these are still just straws.

The government in fact will have no right even to claim that its policies are beginning to work until the British economy is growing by at least 2½ per cent a year. For that was the minimum underlying annual increase in the productivity of the British economy a decade ago. Every government claim about the success of its economic and industrial policy must be tested against that measure of performance. Every claim so tested will be found wanting.

The general economic failure is matched by a corresponding moral failure on the part of the government. Ironically, Mrs Thatcher's main contribution to changing the nature of British life over the rest of this decade may well have been in undermining the 'work ethic' for a large part of the generation that came through adolescence while she was in office. For Mrs Thatcher now to encourage moves further to penalise a generation which her policies have deliberately made into the generation with the least opportunity of any since the war is both the economics of the madhouse and the politics of the workhouse.

An unemployed teenager is a citizen who should have exactly the same rights as anyone else. There is no justification whatsoever for the assertion that Mrs Thatcher and others round her are making that unemployed teenagers on the dole have 'a lot of money in their pockets' and prefer idleness to properly paid work. It comes particularly ill from a government that has paraded its attachment to the idea of the family that it should now be proposing to penalise teenagers and young adults on the dole who are continuing to live at home with their parents.

THE NEW POLICY on reducing the dole for unemployed young people who continue to live at home also represents a direct attempt at coercion. The Youth Training Scheme (despite claims at the highest level to the contrary by the Manpower Services Commission) has not been proving popular. It is therefore not fulfilling its primary political task of massaging downwards the official unemployment figure, counting those actively seeking work and unable to find it.

So far the government has refused to solve the problem by making the Youth Training Scheme more popular by paying those on its projects something rather closer to a living wage. Now it looks as if it is proposing the use of public spending cuts to go about the problem the other way round. By cutting, say, £8 a week from what a teenager in need, looking for work and still living at home, gets by way of the dole, the government is making what the Youth Training Scheme might offer look relatively more attractive.

It is one of the marks of a civilised industrial society that it takes upon itself the responsibility for providing as of right *minimum* standards of living to its citizens. The supplementary benefit system – the dole – represents the embodiment of that system. It is not as if the method of administering its supplementary benefit safety net is excessively benign, or the level of benefit excessively generous. By serving notice that it intends to re-examine the whole basis of the level and method of financing of the welfare state, the Thatcher administration is once again clearly indicating its sense of political priority.

At the beginning of its first term the present government at least had an interesting, if totally implausible, story about how what it was going to do would change things. Less government borrowing would mean lower interest rates, it said, and tax cuts would create a new sense of urgent initiative. But now even the pretence of a theory has just given way to a continuing determination to give money to actual or potential Conservative supporters. There is no evidence that the huge income tax cuts of 1979 produced any qualitative change in the drive of British industrial and commercial management. Yet Mrs Thatcher seems determined to continue to push on down a fiscal road that has a positively American doctrinaire belief in the motive of personal gain and acquisition as the only effective motor in the economy and society. If the money required to give more back to the natural supporters of the Tory Party can only be released by reducing the dole paid to whole sections of our younger population, this government seems to find that a reasonable sway. □

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Is Meacher going to win?

DETAILED ANALYSIS of Labour's electoral college reveals that the deputy leadership election in October could be as close as in 1981, when Denis Healey beat Tony Benn by less than 1 per cent.

Research by political scientists John O'Reilly and Ian Pearson, which has been reported in the *Sunday Times*, gives Michael Meacher an 11.6 per cent lead over Roy Hattersley in the event of a final run-off between the two. But that prediction is subject to considerable uncertainty over one union, NUPE, which they assumed would vote for Meacher, and a block of 'soft left' MPs which they assumed would abstain. Further research by the *New Statesman* into how key unions will vote, and a telephone survey of MPs, has produced a rather different picture. Our 'best guess' gives Hattersley a 3.2 percentage point lead.

Of the three groups which make up the electoral college (trade unions 40 per cent, MPs 30 per cent, constituencies 30 per cent), the unions are the most unpredictable, because such large block votes depend on single decisions. If, for example, the TGWU were to abstain, it would take 8.3 per cent of the electoral collage from Meacher, equivalent to a 5.3 per cent swing to Hattersley, and the contest would not then be even interesting.

However, we have assumed that the five biggest unions will not change their allegiance; in other words, if they voted for Benn in 1981 they will now vote for Meacher, and if they voted for Healey they will now vote for Hattersley. This includes NUPE, which voted for Healey, and whose members are unlikely to be swayed by their executive's recommendation to vote for Meacher.

Hattersley still loses ground, because it is predominantly the right-wing unions that have been losing members. The table below shows the loss (or gain) in members affiliated to the Labour Party since 1981, if any.

The table also shows how five other key unions will be casting their vote. The net effect of these changes will give Hattersley 25.4 per cent in this part of the electoral college, against Meacher's 14.6 per cent (1981: Healey 25 per cent, Benn 15 per cent).

Michael Meacher: less confident

In the Parliamentary Labour Party there are 52 MPs who voted for Benn in 1981. We know of at least one MP who will now vote for Hattersley and assume another two will. All the 82 MPs who voted for Healey we assume will vote for Hattersley. Of the 30 who either voted for Silkin on the first ballot and then abstained or who, like Michael Foot, did not take part in the election at all, we have ascertained the views of 15.

Only one was willing to say he would vote for Meacher. Eight have declared for Hattersley, three wouldn't say, and another three – Neil Kinnock, John Silkin and Eric Deakins – will either abstain or not take part. Silkin intends to vote for Denzil Davies in the first round, but if he is eliminated will abstain. Kinnock is in a more comfortable position than some of his aides (Robin Cook, Alf Dubs and Frank Dobson all voted Silkin/-Benn in 1981) who will have to waste valuable votes or take sides, by implication, on his behalf.

On the basis of this 'canvass' of 1981 abstainers, we have allocated 19 of the 30 to Hattersley, 5 to Meacher, and have assumed 6 will abstain again for various reasons.

This leaves the 43 new MPs (including 3 first elected in by-elections since 1981). O'Reilly and Pearson identified 24 Meacher supporters (including the obvious 'hard left' such as Jeremy Corbyn, Tony Banks, Dave Nellist and Terry Fields), and split the rest arbitrarily into 11 Hattersley supporters and 8 abstainers, in order to reflect the 'softness' of the Hattersley vote. We spoke to some of those classified as 'weak' Hattersley supporters, such as Bryan Gould, who was PPS to Peter Shore in the 1974-79 parliament, who said he was 'inclined to vote for Meacher,' but that he was 'swayed' by the arguments of the other side. In the end it seems more likely that some 4 will abstain.

Our totals for the PLP would be, therefore, Hattersley 119, Meacher 78, with 10 abstentions. This gives Hattersley 18.1 per cent and Meacher 11.7 per cent etc.

In 1981 Benn won four out of five of the constituency Labour Parties, and this will also be Meacher's stronghold in the electoral college this year. However, two factors work in Hattersley's favour. First, he starts from a very low base and can hope to make progress against his relatively obscure opponent. Secondly, many constituencies are conducting membership ballots. But there are several identifiable CLPs which voted for Healey in 1981 and are now likely to change, including Meacher's own constituency, Oldham West. Others are Liverpool W Derby, Newham S, Bethnal Green and Stepney, Rhondda, Derby S and Central Fife.

O'Reilly and Pearson predict that Hattersley will make only a 'modest improvement' on Healey's 1981 position, adding up to 50 CLPs to the 117 that voted for Healey. This would give Hattersley 8.1 per cent of the college in this section and Meacher 21.9 per cent, although the new boundaries make any accurate prediction impossible.

What this analysis shows is that the final result may depend on the vote of two or three key unions.

John Rentoul

How the key unions are voting

Transport and General
8.3 per cent of the electoral college
A confused 'consultation' of the membership was ignored by the Labour Party delegation in 1981, which voted for Silkin on the first ballot and then for Tony Benn. The union's biennial delegate conference at the Isle of Man in July endorsed the executive's nomination of Neil Kinnock for leader, but refused to support Hattersley for deputy. A motion supporting Meacher for the deputy leadership nomination was withdrawn. The decision will be taken by the 40-strong delegation, without a postal ballot ('too expensive') of members or any other form of consultation. A majority of the delegation is likely to be strongly in favour of Meacher, but general secretary Moss Evans is a Hattersley supporter.
MEACHER HOLD

Engineers (AUEW Engineering Section)
5.7 per cent
Delegation will vote as instructed by the executive, which came out for Roy Hattersley within a week of the general election. No membership consultation.
HATTERSLEY HOLD (loss of 25,000 affiliated members)

General, Municipal and Boilermakers
4.3 per cent
The executive has declared for Hattersley, but is consulting behind the scenes with its regions as in 1981. The merger last year with the Boilermakers' union takes a 75,000 block vote from Meacher, as they voted for Benn in 1981, but will not be voting separately this year.
HATTERSLEY HOLD

NUPE
4 per cent
NUPE is conducting a branch ballot for both leader and deputy leader. The result, weighted according to the number in each branch, will be binding on the delegation. A similar branch ballot in 1981 produced a 3 to 2 majority for Healey, but this time the executive has made a recommendation – to vote for Meacher. NUPE's leadership and shop stewards are generally left-wing, but the 1981 result would suggest that the membership is conservative and unlikely to be swayed by Meacher's record of campaigning on low pay.
HATTERSLEY HOLD

Shop workers (USDAW)
2.7 per cent
Executive council has recommended the Kinnock-Hattersley 'dream' ticket, but branches have been asked for their opinion, which will be taken into consideration by the 18-member delegation.
HATTERSLEY HOLD (loss of 32,000 affiliated members)

Electricians (EETPU)
1.2 per cent
In July the EETPU executive, maverick as ever, decided to boycott the election because it didn't approve of the electoral college system (it wants one member-one vote). But the executive can change its mind from 'meeting to meeting' as a spokesman put it, and will come under intense pressure to enter the contest on Hattersley's side. In 1981, of course, the EETPU voted for Healey.
ABSTENTION: *HATTERSLEY LOSS* (loss of 48,000 affiliated members)

ASTMS
0.9 per cent
Consulting its levy-paying members by branch ballot. In 1981 the executive was forced to vote for Benn by a narrow majority in conference. This year's conference has already passed.
HATTERSLEY GAIN (loss of 15,000 affiliated members)

COHSE
1 per cent
Secret ballot for levy-paying members at branch meetings (with postal votes for those who cannot get to meetings), sealed and counted centrally. The result will be binding on the delegation. The same procedure in 1981 produced 57 per cent for Healey and 34 per cent for Benn on a 4 per cent 'turnout'. This year the ballot is being conducted with less haste and at the same time as the union's own deputy leadership election, so more members are expected to participate.
HATTERSLEY HOLD (increase of 15,000 affiliated members)

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Is the US funding secret anti-CND poll?

A SECRET ANTI-CND opinion poll, one of a series costing up to £100,000, is taking place this week throughout Britain. The US government is believed to be behind the poll, which is intended to identify how public opinion can be manipulated in favour of cruise missiles. Questions put in the poll have been heavily biased to obtain favourable answers. The *New Statesman* has obtained a copy of the questions being asked in the poll.

The pollsters, National Opinion Poll (NOP), do not deny that the poll questions may contain false information. But they refuse to reveal the client or the purpose of the survey, which is identified only by a code number, 'NOP9545'. Although the survey has evidently been commissioned in support of the NATO decision to install cruise missiles, NATO, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office all say that they have not been consulted.

The survey involves about 1,000 people in Britain. With more than 80 questions being asked, the survey will cost between £10,000 and £20,000. It is being conducted 'in several countries', according to NOP sources. They believe that the customer is 'the Reagan administration'. Other countries involved appear to be Belgium, Netherlands, West Germany and France. An international survey on this scale is therefore likely to cost up to £100,000. At the US Embassy, a spokesman said he could not comment since 'the person who knows about this is away until Friday'.

The survey employs a sophisticated approach to targeting particular groups who might be made to change their opinion of cruise missiles. After probing the reasons why a respondent might change his or her mind, they are asked whether they can influence other people's opinions, what newspapers and magazines they read, and what current affairs programmes they watch. Questioners are told to 'probe' to discover which newspaper or television commentators are thought 'informative', 'reliable' or are 'fair and accurate'.

The survey questionnaire starts with a statement that its main purpose 'is to find out your views on the country's defence and nuclear weapons'. Although all the questions are connected with cruise missile deployment, the word 'cruise' is only once mentioned.

Many questions are heavily loaded. They include:

- Protest demonstrations – will (they) become *more violent?* (our emphasis)
- How likely or unlikely do you think it is that the Soviet Union will attack Western Europe in the next ten years?
- If the Soviet Union keeps its nuclear superiority in Europe and if it tries to put political pressure in Europe . . . do you think that (it) would succeed?
- Would (it) be better to fight in defence of Britain than to accept domination by the Soviet Union?

In this last question, as in many others, respondents are prompted to choose between given options even though alternative answers are secretly available to the questioner. Answers such as 'I don't believe the Soviet Union will attack' are excluded.

In question 31, respondents are given false information about the nuclear balance, before being asked in detail whether they would accept stationing of cruise missiles in Britain. They are told that while the Soviet Union has '800 nuclear warheads aimed at western Europe, the NATO countries' have 'no land-based nuclear missiles aimed at the Soviet Union'. But France, a non-military member of NATO, has 18 land-based missiles aimed at the Soviet Union.

Many SS20 nuclear missiles are aimed at China. The International Institute of Strategic Studies' current *Military Balance* guide suggests that only 561 SS20 warheads are aimed at Europe. In contrast, Britain and the United States have allocated 592 submarine-based warheads to NATO in Europe. The deliberate emphasis on 'land-based' missiles ignores the conscious decision by NATO in 1963 to make its missiles safer by putting them at sea.

NOP research director Mick Rogers, who is responsible for the survey, said this week that he and his secret client had 'collaborated' in drawing up questions. But:

> If a client wishes to ask whichever questions he wants for his own purpose the questionnaire design is up to him. The phrasing is his own business.

He added: 'I do not wish to discuss this matter at all. You've no right to the questionnaire. I'd like you to return it'.

It is believed that the poll has achieved the biased result that might be expected. This January, the Marplan organisation found only 27 per cent approved of the cruise missile decision. In May, NOP itself reported that 95 per cent of the population insisted on British 'dual key' control of the missiles, if they came. But with the new poll technique, 'approval' of cruise missiles has been elevated to 80 per cent.

Experienced poll researchers described the biased questions contained in the NOP survey as 'thoroughly disreputable'. CND General Secretary Bruce Kent, asked about the questionnaire by the *New Statesman*, said it was 'clear evidence of the manipulation of public opinion before cruise missiles go on station'.

Duncan Campbell

MISCELLANY

Out of joint

Did you know that Chelsea is Labour's most marginal seat? You are dead right, it isn't. But the new *Times Guide to the House of Commons* (Times Books, £15) seems to think it is. Somehow the book has demolished a 12,021 Tory majority on page 75, and turned it into a 71 Labour majority on page 282. Following the tradition established in the *NS* by Gerald Kaufman in 1979, we've been checking out the new *Times Guide* with the help of Oxford political researchers John O'Reilly and Ian Pearson. Remarkably, the new guide repeats two of the mistakes it made last time, getting Edward Heath's resignation details wrong (it took two ballots to elect Thatcher, not three) and inventing a fictitious by-election in Sir Ian Gilmour's career. The new guide also invents non-existent by-elections in Stratford in 1964 and Liverpool West Derby in 1967; its date for the EEC referendum is out by a decade. Bill Pitt, the Liberal victor in the Croydon NW by-election in 1981, fares a bit better: his victory is wrong by only one year. If the guide is to be believed, the Tory candidate for Liverpool Walton, David Croft, is something of a prodigy, having been elected to the city council at the age of 17 – an achievement exceeded only by Twickenham's Toby Jessel, who became a member of the GLC a full eight years before it was set up. People whose past terms as MP have been allocated to the wrong constituency include Bruce Millan, Clive Soley and Roderick MacFarquhar. The Scottish Nationalists will be surprised to learn that they lost Paisley in 1979, as they never won it – just as the well-entrenched Harrow Tories will be startled to learn that Harrow West Labour candidate Albert Tomes is now their deputy leader on the borough council. And if we were Oxford West Labour candidate Julian Jacottet, we'd be tempted to sue. He is described as 'former general secretary of the Social Democratic Party in North Ireland'. Robert Dunn (Con., Dartford) might also consider reaching for his lawyer; he is falsely accused of currently holding a commercial job, as adviser to J. Sainsbury, at the same time as holding a paid government post. But then the *Times Guide* could always enter the defence that nobody believes it anyway.

Colin Wheeler

Wight less

Incidentally, we think – readers will doubtless tell us if we are wrong – that page 143 of the new *Times Guide* contains a new record. In the Isle of Wight, Kathy Wilson, Labour candidate and active Militant member, achieved just 2.4 per cent of the vote. We think this is the lowest ever achieved by a Labour candidate in any parliamentary election. This year, Ms Wilson's performance was bettered by, among others, the National Front candidate in Newham South (3.7 per cent), the Communist in Rhondda (2.8) and the Ecologist Party candidate in Ogmore (2.9).

Compliments of the season

To celebrate the new football season the National Front plans to brighten up our increasingly dull and empty soccer grounds by selling its literature, trying to recruit members and, as one source had it, 'attempting to gain the ground we lost last year'. Front organiser, the large and lovely Martin Webster, was of limited help when we spoke to him about the subject. 'You made up that quotation, didn't you,' he accused. 'It's an old trick. And I'm not telling you anything, you'd only get your left-wing hooligans to attack us.' Surely some mistake.

Of certain age

Judith Hines, who joined Age Concern Scotland four years ago, was surprised to be told that she was being dismissed. The reason Age Concern no longer required her services was that she was, er, too old. Ms Hines has protested against the decision. She is only 61, and had been intending to work until she was 65. But Age Concern say it is their policy to retire women at 60. Ms Hines has appealed to an industrial tribunal, whose preliminary ruling has been in her favour.

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Tale of the Unexpected

ARGUMENT is currently raging over the publication by author Roald Dahl of a review of *God Cried*, the book covering the Lebanon tragedy, in *The Literary Review*. In the 2½ page article Dahl makes a virulent attack on Israel: 'Must Israel, like Germany, be brought to her knees before she learns how to behave in this world?' and repeatedly compares Israeli leaders to the Nazis. But what has so angered Jewish and non-Jewish readers alike, is his failure to distinguish between Israeli and Jew, and what is seen as his 'clear anti-Semitism'.

Dahl writes: 'Never before in the history of man has a race of people switched rapidly from being much-pitied victims to barbarous murderers. Never before has a race of people generated so much sympathy around the world and then, *in the space of a lifetime, succeeded* in turning that sympathy into hatred and revulsion.'

He goes on to condemn 'Jewish financial institutions' and 'American Jewish bankers', and concludes his review with: 'Now is the time for the Jews of the world to follow the example of the Germans and become anti-Israeli. But do they have the conscience? And do they, I wonder, have the guts?'

Union of Jewish Students Chairman Matthew Kalman sees the article as 'one of the most vitriolic pieces ever written about Jews in a British publication', and when Roald Dahl was asked about it by the *NS* he made a series of startling comments. Referring to 'do they, I wonder, have the guts?' Dahl said: 'Perhaps I shouldn't have said that, but it came from my wartime experience [in the RAF], we saw almost none of them in the armed forces then. I mean if you and I were in a line moving towards what we knew were gas chambers I'd rather have a go at taking one of the guards with me; but they were always submissive.'

He continued: 'This I did not dare to say, but there is a trait in the Jewish character that does provoke animosity, maybe it's a kind of lack of generosity towards non-Jews. I mean Hitler, I mean there's always a reason why anti-anything crops up anywhere; even a stinker like Hitler didn't just pick on them for no reason . . .'

Literary Review owner Naim Attalah has been put in a difficult position by the article. A Palestinian, Attalah is a supporter of a homeland for his people, but not even the crudest Zionist could accuse him of anti-Semitism. 'Mr Dahl romanticised to me about his wartime experiences in Palestine and, after first refusing, agreed to write the review,' said Attalah. 'I wanted someone who was fresh, not one of the usual Arabist writers. I can't really comment on any of my contributors . . . I would say that in my opinion the best way to convince people is through moderation.'

The Jewish community is outraged by the affair but does not think the article is actionable in law. Henry Morris, chairman of the Jewish Board of Deputies' Defence Committee, said: 'I regard the article as being deeply offensive and insulting to Jews. This might be added to his Tales of the Unexpected, with just as much credibility.'

Mike Coren

Unions win in Wandsworth

UNIONS HAVE WON significant battles over the past fortnight with two of the largest companies operating local authority services in Britain. In the London borough of Wandsworth, whose Tory-controlled council is the standard-bearer of privatisation, Grand Met Waste Services has agreed to recognise the General and Municipal Workers' union (GMB) after union officials proved that a majority of the refuse collectors employed by the company have joined the union.

The move came after 100 refuse collectors walked out on a one-day strike over new work arrangements. The union is now fighting for the enactment of a £4 to £6-a-week pay award made to the refuse collectors by the Central Arbitration Committee.

And on Monday this week 38 gardeners in the borough employed by Pritchard Industrial Services went back to work after winning a series of guarantees on wages and conditions. In its bid to end the four-week strike, Pritchards has allowed a works committee to be set up, and has undertaken that 'task prices' will not be imposed unilaterally under the company's new piece-work system. The company admitted that the new system might have meant the gardeners earned nothing on any one day (because of the weather or breakdowns), and has guaranteed a daily fall-back rate. Contracts of employment and protective clothing are being issued. The company has refused to recognise the union involved, NUPE, but has undertaken to do nothing to dissuade employees from joining a union.

One reason why Pritchards has been keen to settle its differences with the workforce could be that it has been in danger of being thrown off the gardens contract ever since it began in mid-March. The company has now forfeited £85,000 in financial penalties for failing to do the job properly (when the *NS* reported on this contract four weeks ago penalties totalled £45,000).

The council's leisure and amenities services chairman Edward Lister said Pritchards would probably be given until the end of the summer to sort themselves out. 'If they don't, then we shall terminate,' he said.

Meanwhile, in the nearby borough of Merton another private firm is running into difficulties over its street-sweeping contract. Taskmasters, a subsidiary of the Alfred Marks group, has been fined £14,500 for failing to clean to the required standard. It has been forced to hire extra workers, but fears it could lose the contract.

Quentin McDermott

NUPE and the Institute for Workers' Control have published a pamphlet this week called Fighting Privatisation: The Struggle for Wandsworth, *price 90p available from IWC, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble St, Nottingham.*

Home Office backs down over prison protest

THE HOME OFFICE Prison Department last week announced that it has suspended all outstanding hearings against prisoners charged with mutiny following the Albany prison protest in May. Criticism of the internal, secret Board of Visitors hearings has steadily mounted as information emerged about savage sentences meted out.

Sentences of loss of remission ranging from 400 to 670 days have been passed, equivalent to additional prison terms of one to two years, in hearings in which prisoners have no right of legal representation, no right to call witnesses and no right to cross-examine. Internal prison guidance on these hearings permits prisoners to ask questions, with the permission of the Board of Visitors, but not to 'argue' with witnesses. The hearings have taken place in a number of prisons throughout the country thus further reducing the ability of prisoners to call witnesses or organise their defence.

The publicity surrounding these hearings has led Andrew Rutherford, a member of Winchester Board of Visitors, to resign. In his letter of resignation he argued for 'an independent oversight of prison establishments' and also said that 'the Board should not be involved in disciplinary hearings'.

Despite the decision to stop the hearings, the Home Office has refused to overturn the punishments already meted out. This has led a group of prisoners to seek High Court action to have their punishments quashed until other legal actions (which led to the Home Office's decision to halt the hearings) have been resolved.

There are two legal cases pending, one in Britain and one in Europe. Jimmy Tarrant, one of the Albany prisoners, has an action in the High Court to establish the right of legal aid and legal representation for prisoners involved in internal disciplinary procedures.

The second case was brought by Sean Campbell, one of six prisoners sentenced to long terms of lost remission after an earlier protest at Albany in 1976. He brought a case before the European Court of Human Rights, which is expected to give its judgment in September. The European Commission of Human Rights has already criticised disciplinary procedures in British prisons.

Although extensive and public criticism of Board of Visitors hearings has halted the Albany hearings, the Home Office has gone ahead with internal hearings against prisoners involved in the Wormwood Scrubs protests of 16 and 24 June (see *NS* 9, 22 and 29 July). Eight prisoners have been sentenced to long periods of solitary confinement: Larry Delaney 168 days, John Mogridge 84 days, Chris Clarke, Wayne Smith and one other 77 days, Alan Hirst 56 days and Neil Wallace 42 days. Tommy Tangey, responsible for the 24 June demonstration, has effectively been sentenced to 112 days' solitary. Jimmy Anderson's case has not yet been heard. He too has a legal action pending in the High Court to establish the right of access by prisoners to solicitors without having to make an internal complaint first – which exposes them to punishment for making false or malicious complaints.

The Home Office refuses to discuss which prisoners are involved in internal disciplinary hearings, or even to say in which prison the hearings are being held, or to confirm sentences that have been passed. Our information has been obtained from relatives and letters.

● Evidence has emerged to show that the Home Office was aware of mounting tension in Albany prison in the weeks before the protest which began on 21 May. One week before the protest, a well-known Irish prisoner, Ray MacLoughlin, was transferred out of Albany to Bristol. He has since, on 25 July, been transferred to Wakefield F-wing and has now spent a total of 15 weeks in solitary confinement. The Home Office does not acknowledge the existence of solitary confinement, but this is what the transfer and isolation of prisoners suspected of stirring up trouble amounts to. Nor is solitary confinement considered a 'punishment' under Prison Rules, so not even the rudimentary internal disciplinary procedures, involving the nominally 'external' Board of Visitors, have to be followed. MacLoughlin has been involved in prison protests in the past and is known to the authorities and to other prisoners as being concerned about prisoners' rights.

Terry O'Halloran

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TELEVISION

The last television election?

Next Wednesday at the Edinburgh Television Festival – a recent lively addition to the main festival – senior politicians, including Roy Hattersley and David Steel, will debate with TV producers and executives the way the broadcasters covered this year's general election. Peter Kellner sets the scene in a special article for the festival's programme. This is an edited version of that article.

FOR A NUMBER of reasons, the most telling moment of this year's election television occurred at 6.40pm on 24 May, when Mrs Joyce Gould of Cirencester appeared on *Nationwide* and asked Mrs Thatcher her celebrated question about the sinking of the *General Belgrano*. It was one of the few moments during the election when Mrs Thatcher lost her cool. It was wholly unplanned. It was something probably no professional interviewer could have achieved. (Mrs Thatcher would have responded to the identical question from Brian Walden, or Sir Robin Day, with a bruising rebuke that cannot easily be visited on a west country housewife.) It was, above all, a moment when, in full view of the teatime viewing voter, the plateglass window that separates the public from politicians and TV producers was briefly lifted, and we saw something of the election in the raw.

It has become a ritual of elections for politicians to complain about their treatment by the media, and for radio and TV producers to bemoan the failure of politicians to understand the demands of the media. This ritual serves two purposes. It gives the politicians the chance, at the margin, to try to tilt coverage a little more in their direction; under cover of a general attack on TV's sense of balance they may secure, say, a slight partisan improvement in who are shown, when they are shown, and what they are shown doing or saying.

Second, the ritual conflict between the media and the parties enables the broadcasting authorities to 'demonstrate' their independence. Nothing is better than a row to dispel suspicions that the business of covering elections on TV in fact requires a high degree of collusion between the parties. A newspaper can, at a pinch, cover an election with nothing more than a pass to the parties' press conferences and a ticket to their leaders' meetings. TV producers depend to a far greater extent on the close cooperation of politicians – to agree to appear, to turn up at the right time and to accept the general framework for the programme as determined by the producer and presenter. And, of course, most politicians are only too happy most of the time to accept the system. One effective five minute appearance on the box is worth more than many hundreds of hours spent by party workers filling envelopes with election leaflets, or knocking on doors.

In reality, the framework within which television has covered recent elections has become remarkably cosy for both broadcasters and politicians. Broadcasters, very properly required by law to be balanced, have to use considerable managerial and technical skills to ensure that each party receives its allocated time – no more and no less; but, beyond that, little creative or intellectual effort is required or applied.

IN 1979 the agreed ratio was 5:5:3; that is, during the election campaign, Labour and the Conservatives were each allowed five election broadcasts and the Liberals three. The broadcasters, as usual, chose to apply the same formula to news and current affairs. News bulletins, in particular, were governed as much by the demands of the stopwatch as by judgments of news value.

Between elections, much looser controls over the allocation of news time apply, but, by tradition, as soon as a general election is called, the ratios of airtime allocated to each party for its campaign broadcasts also apply to news and current affairs coverage. Hence the sensitivity of the issue. The difference this year was that the ratios, both for election campaign broadcasts by the parties and for news and current affairs programmes, were decided by the broadcasters and *not* settled by agreement with the parties.

At the meeting of the Committee on Political Broadcasting on the evening of 11 May, two days after the election was announced, both Roy Jenkins and David Steel turned up in person to argue the case for complete parity for the Liberal/SDP Alliance with the other two parties. (These meetings are normally between the parties' chief whips and the BBC and IBA.) Michael Cocks for Labour and Michael Jopling for the Conservatives both argued for a repeat of 1979's 5:5:3.

After an hour or so of deadlocked debate, John Biffen – leader of the House and chairman of the committee – asked the broadcasters to leave the meeting. Forty minutes later he summoned them back to report that the parties were unable to reach agreement and that the broadcasters would have to decide the formula for themselves.

Faced with this novel predicament, the

Preparing for a tête-a-tête Brian Walden and friend at No. 10

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BBC and IBA said that they would allow the Alliance four election broadcasts and the traditional five each for Labour and the Tories. It was a prudent compromise which irritated all the parties just about equally. As it is the invariable, but intellectually indefensible practice for broadcasting executives to equate symmetry of criticism with impartiality of judgment, they were satisfied. So 5:5:4 it was – not only for the party broadcasts, but for other election programmes as well.

SUCH CO-ORDINATION did not apply to the decisions that led to the extraordinary amount of exposure granted to the party leaders. In previous elections, it was standard for seven programmes to be devoted to the leaders: three *Nationwides* (with an interview with each leader), three *This Weeks* (ditto) and the final *Granada 500* programme, in which the three leaders would be quizzed in succession by the audience. This year, there were 16 TV programmes with the party leaders, in the space of less than three weeks – or almost one a day. The additional programmes were Brian Walden's three interviews on *Weekend World*, Sir Robin Day's three on *Panorama* and another three conducted by Day on Radio Four's *Election Call*, which was televised each morning on BBC1 following the end of the channel's *Breakfast Time*.

In effect, the sum total of these decisions created two television elections: that on the majority channels, BBC1 and ITV, which concentrated heavily on banana skins (in news bulletins) and party leaders (in other programmes), and the 'other' election on the minority channels, BBC2 and Channel Four, which took a deeper look at policies and issues (*Newsnight*, *Channel Four News*, *Granada 500*, *A Week in Politics*).

Individually, each of the interviews with the party leaders on BBC1 and ITV can be defended; cumulatively, the fact that the party leaders so dominated the current affairs output on the mainstream channels made the election far more presidential than any previous one. This, too, can be defended. 'Thatcherism' has entered the political language, while no equivalent word was evolved to personalise the years of Heath, Wilson or Callaghan. And, on Labour's side, the competence and style of Michael Foot were matters of deep concern within the party, so Labour can scarcely complain if journalists matched the activists in the interest they showed, if not the conclusions they drew. Within the Liberal/SDP Alliance, too, the respective roles of David Steel and Roy Jenkins were matters of legitimate inquiry.

Yet the extent of leader-oriented television, particularly on ITV, was a product of cock-up rather than conspiracy. For some months before the election, three separate groups of broadcasters sought to persuade Mrs Thatcher and Mr Foot to debate with each other in front of the cameras: the BBC, which offered *Panorama*; LWT, through *Weekend World's* Brian Walden; and ITN together with Thames's *TV Eye*, offering to mount a joint series of programmes presented by Alastair Burnet.

When executives from the different ITV companies met in the spring in the election working party of the Independent Television Contractors Association, Thames made it clear that, if the debate did not materialise, *TV Eye* would revert to the pattern of previous elections set by its predecessor programme, *This Week*. LWT's Barry Cox refused to subordinate his wish to hold a debate to the ITN/Thames bid, or to back away from interviewing the party leaders if both bids failed.

Until shortly before the election was called, LWT thought that their approach would succeed. Foot was keen and so was Thatcher: the Prime Minister had told Walden so herself. Moreover, Thatcher's public relations adviser, Gordon Reece, had changed his mind since 1979. Then, he was opposed to the idea; now he was enthusiastic. Thatcher, he judged, would trounce Foot. In the event, however, Reece found himself isolated at a meeting in April of the most senior Conservative election planners. William Whitelaw and Francis Pym strongly opposed the idea, while Cecil Parkinson and Norman Tebbit were, at best, lukewarm. When the mood of the meeting was conveyed to Thatcher, she accepted its verdict. As soon as the election was announced, all three debate bidders were informed of 'her' decision.

Barry Cox defends his decision to go ahead with the separate interviews of the leaders by Walden, even though he knew *TV Eye* would do the same: 'We at LWT felt that Walden had become *the* major interviewer – certainly within the ITV system. It would have looked very odd if we had gone through the whole election without Walden interviewing the leaders. Everyone, including the parties, had come to expect it. Even before we approached her at the start of the campaign, Mrs Thatcher had logged the final Sunday in her diary for the *Weekend World* interview.'

And so it came to pass that the flagship current affairs programme on ITV, like *Panorama* on BBC, abandoned its previous practice of holding debates among other cabinet and shadow cabinet ministers, usually on specific issues. In February 1974, probably the most issue-oriented of any recent election, *Panorama* mounted programmes on the economy, industrial relations and the Common Market, while *Weekend World* covered inflation, 'a fair society' and the Liberal revival. There has, without doubt, been a major retreat from this particular bastion of the public service broadcasting tradition.

THE BROADCASTERS may find it hard to return to that tradition at the next election, even if they want to. The prospect of viewers starting to avoid election programmes altogether is at least as serious as the erosion of public service broadcasting. The last 25 years have been an historical freak. Before 1959, radio and TV scarcely touched elections, except to transmit the parties' own campaign broadcasts. Voters received their information and ideas about the parties from newspapers, from each other and, to a variable extent, from the parties themselves.

Between 1959 and 1983 – most strongly between 1964 and 1979 – television was not only the most powerful medium for imparting election information, it was also very largely a shared experience. With just two or three channels to choose from, a considerable amount of election programming on the main channels, and a commitment to broadcast 'issues' programmes, Britain's electorate was subject to a common barrage of information and ideas.

This year's election may prove to be as significant, in its way, as 1959. If that was the first election to be conducted through television, 1983 may the first to force television onto the retreat. The concentration on leaders on the main channels, leaving 'issues' to BBC2 and Channel Four; the existence of a fourth channel which carried no election programming at all between 8 and 10.30pm; and the growing ownership of video cassette recorders – no longer can politicians rely on their easy access to prime time television to debate issues in front of a largely captive audience. By 1987 or 1988, no viewer need feel driven to the extreme of turning off the TV set in order to avoid the election; conversely, programme makers and politicians will have to earn their election audiences rather than assume them.

(During the election, I received what may prove to be a sharp taste of things to come. I was sitting in the back of a BBC taxi, being ferried to a studio. The driver asked me what programmes I was involved with. I explained. 'Well I'm glad I don't have to watch any of it,' he replied. 'In fact, I can miss the election altogether, now I've got a video.')

The fragmentation of TV audiences will pose great problems for the parties – especially the Labour Party, with its shortage of funds and lack of Fleet Street support. Television may have killed off the traditional local election campaign, with its concentration on door-to-door persuasion, window stickers and public meetings (although I suspect that the impact of those things was less than party mythology would have us believe). But the quarter-century of TV domination of election information *did* help Labour. The very fact, by law, Labour received equal coverage with the Conservatives did help the party overcome other disadvantages. If Labour came across less persuasively this year, it is not solely the broadcasters' fault.

Now Labour (and, for that matter, the other parties) may have to re-invent effective local campaigning. Of course, there are local campaigns and local campaigns: those that reinforce the message being transmitted on our TV screens, and those that ignore or contradict it. A whole new series of political skills will have to be acquired. Just when Labour, following the trauma of 9 June, is seriously trying to reconcile itself to *what* voters think, it will have to start discovering *how* people come to think it – and how they can be persuaded to think differently. Mastering the techniques of TV will continue to be a major task: but there will be other, increasingly important, tasks too. □

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ENTERTAINMENT

Pageants for the people

Malcolm Lynch recalls the art of popular protest and suggests how we might rekindle it

I AM a white-haired old man, and I have an old dog named Sheba after the Queen of Sheba. Before the general election we sat together and watched another white-haired old man and his dog ambling down the streets hoping to lead the Labour Party to victory. The television set yawned and wanted to go to sleep; Sheba in fact went to sleep; but I wanted to walk the dark lanes and pretend I was young again. I was down in the hollow. Socialism had grown old, it was heading for bookshelf retirement. But socialism must not be permitted to grow old; it is too young to be old; it is more than a political philosophy, it must be a way of life, a grand singing colourful way of life; it must radiate from the young.

I think it was twopence; yes, it was twopence. When I was a youth before the war I paid twopence to get into the International Club in Mosley Street, Manchester. It was a posh little place, no doubt some little millowner had once lived in it; it had a touch of dignity. It was the sort of place you could take your girl to on Saturday night and tell her some day you would man the barricades or storm the barricades depending on who had put them up in the first place. There were no qualifications required to be a socialist; you didn't have to be unemployed or under-privileged or even a miner or a docker: you could be a young man in a white shirt, working hard at a job, and rattling money in your pocket.

Tea, coffee and cocoa were kept steaming at the alert. There was chess and table tennis. There was a library, and Karl Marx was somewhere on a shelf, but nobody bothered about him because he was dull and boring; but there were books which got their points home like *Fame is the Spur*, *And Quiet Flows the Don* and *Grapes of Wrath*. Occasionally you could hear laughter coming from another room -- yes, socialist laughter.

Most Sundays, particularly if the weather was bad, two or three dozen of us would catch a train to some lonely station in Derbyshire and ramble and stumble over the Pennines. Talk all the time was of how to grow socialism, pot it, pick it, pickle it, preserve it, wash it, dry it, iron it, read it, chew it, drink it, wear it, shape it, paint it, dance it. It was a living, growing way of life, and it was exciting.

Socialist songs were sung on these rambles: there were many of them to lively German and French tunes. 'The Red Flag' was rarely sung because it was too much like a hymn. Of course, to be fair, we young socialists cheated; we had things going for or against us like the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, the Franco war in Spain, and lots of nasty speeches by Hitler. These were enemies which enhanced your cause and which any beginner could cope with. It seemed possible to face an SS brigade on your own, as long as your girl was watching from a safe distance, armed only with a pitchfork; and we could always refer to Hemingway's new testament *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Nuclear warfare is unfair to pitchforks.

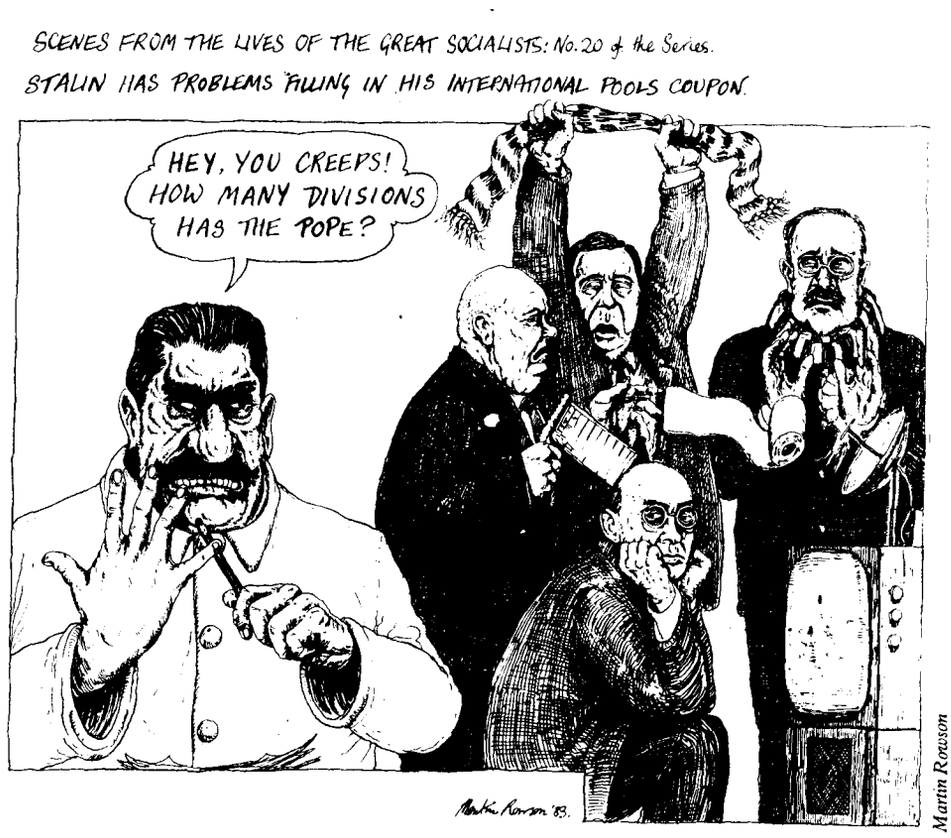
I was lucky. I was able to earn my living by presenting merry socialism on television. In 1967 I was one of the team of writers of *Coronation Street*. It didn't quite go as planned. For instance, the character Stan Ogden was meant to have fought in the Spanish Civil War, but the comedian in him suppressed that. Writer Jim Allen was on the writing team at the time and he occasionally gave Len Fairclough a marxist speech in the Rovers Return but this was invariably edited by producer Jack Rosenthal who explained to Jim that this was a pub and not the TUC conference hall. By and large *Coronation Street* had wisps of socialism blowing through the cracks, but it gradually became a stupendous fairy story.

My personal theory about *Coronation Street* was that as an entertainment presentation it had nothing whatsover to do with Shakespeare and English theatre tradition. It was a direct pedigree descendant of the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th century workers' pageant plays in which good always triumphed over evil. In those days the tradesmen's guilds produced their own plays which were carted around the streets on wagons. The theatre box on wheels had now become a television box on castors, and the audiences watched a pageant of working-class people in a working-class district, inwardly hissing and booing the baddies, switching on week by week to see a cloth-capped St George slay the bowler-hatted dragon.

I GOT THE chance to put my theory into practice. The United Textile Factory Workers Association offered me £100 to organise a protest for them; they were protesting against their own Labour government for the closing down of Lancashire cotton mills and the importing of foreign produce. In seven months 48 firms had been closed; seven closures were attributed to imports, 27 to slack trade, 11 to rationalisation, one to death duties, and two to unknown reasons.

Secretary Jim Milhench gave me instructions: 'Let's break away from carrying banners and pushing prams to Downing Street. Instead let's bring the MPs to Manchester, sit them down, entertain them, then dig them in the ribs.'

I decided to write a pageant play and call it 'Padlock On The Gate'. It would be put on by the cotton people, and based as near as dammit on its mediaeval parents. I studied the Wakefield Mystery Plays; even in those days the workingmen's guilds were blunt in


SCENES FROM THE LIVES OF THE GREAT SOCIALISTS: No. 20 of the Series.
STALIN HAS PROBLEMS FILLING IN HIS INTERNATIONAL POOLS COUPON.
HEY, YOU CREEPS! HOW MANY DIVISIONS HAS THE POPE?
Martin Rowson '83.

Martin Rowson

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Workers slam George

By BRIAN HOPE, our Industrial Correspondent

3,000 at rally: 'Save mills'

BY BRIAN HOPE, our Industrial Correspondent

FIERCE criticism of the Government's "broken promises" and "lack of action" ... industry came today

Cotton workers complain

Mr. George Brown caricatured in a sketch

LANGUAGE

Press reaction to *Padlock on the Gate*, the textile workers' 1967 protest against mill closures

their criticisms of the capitalist systems, mixing it up, shaking not stirring, with Jesus and Mary. Take the opening of the Second Shepherds' Play:

But we simple shepherds that walk on the moor,
Are soon by richer hands thrust out of door;
No wonder as it stands, if we be poor,
For the tilth of our lands lies as fallow as the floor.
As you know, we are so lamed, overtaxed and maimed
And cruelly tamed by our gentlemen foe.

Along these lines I wrote:

Although I'm not much of a sinner it's down to the devil I go
To ask him if he needs a spinner in the mill that he's got there below;
With lots of warm fire to enfold me, and lots of good comrades as well,
A Sunday School teacher once told me
There's no unemployment in Hell.

I wrote a score of lyrics and set them to traditional Irish rebel songs. Barry Cockcroft, now a top Yorkshire producer, produced the pageant play and wrote additional dialogue. It was performed by the Rochdale Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society, most of them millworkers, and it was staged in King's Hall, Belle Vue. Seven thousand cottonworkers turned up to watch. But I wasn't there.

The pageant play was intended to slam the Labour government on behalf of the unions; among the MPs attending were Mr George Brown and Mr Greenwood, but I learned that Mr J. P. W. Mallalieu would also be there. Now in my mind J. P. W. Mallalieu was one of the kindest, gentlest and most sincere men you could wish to meet in a month of Sundays; he had been one of my sponsors for Manchester University – and there was no way I could see him wince at my words. So I drove on my own all around Derbyshire that day unable to face my own pageant play.

Was it a success? A tremendous success. The next morning, 12 August 1967, every national newspaper gave it the front page with photographs and extensive quotes; it was taken up by some European and American newspapers, and BBC radio broadcast a number of songs.

With the freedom given to me by Jim Milhench I had proved to myself that the natural heartcry of the people can be effective if presented in an ancient way. I had hoped to have demonstrated to the unions and the Labour government that there were entertaining ways of presenting their cases; sincere and vivid ways. But no! The people have gone back to the placards; they paint their faces like clowns; they push prams to Downing Street.

SO WHY HAVE I written all this? In the hope the unions will do more than be televised on picket lines. They could form clubs for young people – without pool tables and fruit machines. The theories of the London School of Economics are far too boring for out-of-work school leavers; Karl Marx will never fire their imaginations as a national hero; they need something more. During this rule of Mrs Thatcher, encourage them to think, sing, hop, skip, dance, write, laugh and talk. Let them write and perform guild pageant plays wherever they can get an audience; let them do it well. Knock boards together, help them build pageant carts, fix lights and amplifiers for them. Persuade them to write folk songs for the guitar or steel drum; let them play in the parks, pubs and subways. Ask them to paint pictures to be shown at an exhibition. There are other songs than the 'Red Flag' yet to be sung, yet to be written.

We old men must encourage, not lead. Merlin, shave off your beard, you'll look younger and feel younger. Tell Lancelot your secrets before he rides through the gates.

There are times when my dog wants a fireside rug and I hanker after a rocking chair. We would like to relax, take it easy, doze off, forget everything, become Social Democrats. Then Sheba barks because she imagines a pageant cart in a crowded square with Thomas Paine, John Stuart Mill and J. P. W. Mallalieu as the three shepherds. □

Malcolm Lynch was a script-writer who was credited with saving The Archers *by introducing social realism into the then fey series.*

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THIS ENGLAND

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☐ It is bad enough to agree to have cruise missiles here in England, but to have American football as well must surely herald the end of our ancient and revered civilisation. – Letter in *The Times* (Premen Addy)

☐ Lord Montagu started something recently which threatens to engulf the Museum scene in a wave – the new fashion is smells. Ever since Lord M ordered the smell of poverty for his reconstructed peasant's cottage at Bucklers Hard . . . – *Quarterly Bulletin of the Association of Independent Museums No. 23* (Valerie Bott)

☐ A woman arrested for soliciting in Kings Cross complained bitterly to police about the wording of the vice charge. She told the arresting officer: 'I really do object to being called a common prostitute. A prostitute I am. Common I am not.' She was fined £30 when she admitted loitering in Euston Road. – *Hampstead & Highgate Express* (Carola Zentner)

☐ Every church should have a troupe of clowns, the Rev Donald Reeve said yesterday opening a weekend workshop at St James's, Piccadilly, London, to spread the faith by clowning and puppetry. – *Daily Mail* (Stephen Regan)

☐ It seems to have become an established practice for newsreaders, when reporting the death of a public figure, to say that he 'is dead'. I noticed this again with the sad news of David Niven's death. Would it not be a little less brutal to say 'has died'? – Letter in *Radio Times* (David Spilsbury)

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DEFENCE

Infamous last words

Stanley Bonnett on Lord Mountbatten's nuclear beliefs

Camera Press

Mountbatten and nephew: he changed his mind by the end

LORD MOUNTBATTEN was assassinated four years ago this week, on Monday 27 August 1979. But Mountbatten and all the nuclear weapons establishments of the West had finally parted company 107 days before.

On 11 May, in the French city of Strasbourg, the former Chief of the British Defence Staff, former head of the Royal Navy and begetter of the Polaris submarine programme, fed into the public record the most outrageous truth he knew:

> In the event of a nuclear war there will be no chances, there will be no survivors – all will be obliterated. I am not asserting this without having deeply thought about the matter.
> When I was Chief of the British Defence Staff I made my views known. I have heard the arguments against this view, but I have never found them convincing. So I repeat in all sincerity as a military man I can see no use for any nuclear weapons which would not end in escalation, with consequences which no one can conceive . . .
> As a military man who has given half a century of active service I say in all sincerity that the nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence only adds to our perils because of the illusions which they have generated . . .

Having thought deeply about nuclear weapons, Mountbatten that day delivered a 2,000-word attack upon them. Very little of his attack made news copy the next day and efforts continue to be made to suggest that he was out of his mind when he made the speech, which, in any case, 'must have been distorted and mis-quoted'.

The reason Mountbatten was in Strasbourg on that fateful day 107 days before his death was that he had chosen to speak on the occasion of the award of the Louise Weiss Foundation Prize to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a body financed by the Swedish Parliament and supported by Swedish royalty.

Mountbatten had become increasingly drawn to SIPRI, to the disapproval of nuclear weapon advocates here and elsewhere. His speech was little reported at the time. It is not listed in *The Times Index* for 1979, for example. Privately, it was angrily analysed by his growing host of military and political critics, who saw him not just as a god who had failed them, but also as a god bent upon the destruction of their philosophy.

Mountbatten had certainly changed. When he became First Sea Lord in 1955, he was very pro-nuclear. More than that, he was very much under the influence of Hyman George Rickover, the American admiral who fathered the nuclear submarine concept. Mountbatten wanted Britain to have nuclear submarines. Rickover wanted those submarines to be slotted absolutely into American methodology – in engineering, tactics, strategy and ultimate control.

Sir Harold Evans, in his book *Vickers Against The Odds, 1956/77*, says of Rickover at that period: 'By the mid-fifties he had reached such eminence that he could put into practice his belief that business should be done only with the people right at the top. With Mountbatten and the Queen as his allies, it was said, he believed that no obstacles were insurmountable . . . At the Admiralty Lord Mountbatten, as First Sea Lord, found the "buy American" argument more persuasive, supported as it was by powerful voices among his advisers.'

American 'Skipjack' main machinery was bought for the first British nuclear submarine, *HMS Dreadnought*. The British public was assured that possession of nuclear submarines would give the country true independence and automatic membership of the 'Nuclear Club'. Mountbatten went along with it all.

HE WAS IN his third year as Chief of the Defence Staff when the Kennedy-Macmillan talks were held in Nassau in 1962. Mountbatten's Royal Navy was expecting to get the American Skybolt missiles for the independent British nuclear fleet. At Nassau, the Americans suddenly announced that they were not going ahead with Skybolt. They were having Polaris instead. But no deal had been fixed for Polaris and, deliberately, none was forthcoming.

In the words of Sir Harold Evans: 'In the upshot, tough talking led to a compromise: the Polaris system would be made available, with British nuclear warheads fitted to the missiles, but the British Polaris submarines would be "allocated" to NATO . . .'. Sir Harold continued: '. . . the State Department certainly, and possibly the President himself, felt the proposed switch to Polaris provided an opportunity to edge Britain out of the nuclear power club . . .'

Mountbatten was a disciple of Rickover sure enough, but now he could see he was on the other side of the table in the tough power-stakes poker game. Deep thoughts of a new kind were vital. Since 1960, the Defence Ministry had been blessed with Solly Zuckerman as its Chief Scientific Adviser. Zuckerman had long seen through the nuclear weapons myth. The arguments Zuckerman supported and propounded impressed Mountbatten more and more.

In 1966, the year after Mountbatten stepped down as Defence Chief, SIPRI was formed in Sweden. According to Frank Barnaby, the British director of SIPRI, Mountbatten visited the organisation as early as 1971, staying with Zuckerman at the royal palace. Mountbatten's sister had been Queen. Frank Barnaby says that Mountbatten was invited to Strasbourg because he was 'the most illustrious member of the scientific council, and Louise Weiss, the French authoress, was very keen to have him there'.

As to suggestions that Mountbatten did not really say all those things about nuclear weapons, Barnaby says there can be no question as to the accuracy of the speech in the form in which the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament endeavours still to give it publicity. 'There was an advance text and there is possibly a tape recording of him delivering it.'

Deliver it he did, to the horror of the nuclear lobbies. □

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Lessons out of feminism

Lynne Segal argues that in its search for a new radical consensus, the Labour Party should look at other movements' successes

IT IS IRONIC that, while so many on the Left debate the question of their own 'survival', we are hearing more serious discussion of socialist, feminist and anti-racist ideas, and from far wider and more popular sources, than I have ever heard before.

Though Bernard Crick (*NS* 5 August) contemptuously dismisses the new left politics of the '60s and early '70s as 'student socialism' or 'street-theatre' trash, it is their language – 'democracy from below', 'bottom-up politics', 'participatory democracy', real equality through 'positive discrimination' – that is engaging the energy and imagination of many people. And people no longer just at the margins, but, increasingly, in Labour Party wards and local councils. While productivity and wealth creation in our very wealthy society remain the only (short-sighted) vision of the new Kinnockettes, the spectre of the '60s is returning to haunt the Labour Party wards of the '80s.

As Barry Hindess argued (*NS* 5 August), there is nothing new in saying that the Labour Party has lost its traditional base. We often heard it in the '60s, in and outside of academia. Goldthorpe and Lockwood, authors of *The Affluent Worker,* warned us of the growing conservatism of a skilled working class increasingly affluent, propertied and suburbanised. Even working-class socialists, in the pits or on the railways, were disillusioned with nationalisation. Student radicals everywhere were sure that the working class had grown to hate the bureaucratic regimentation of nationalised industries and the welfare state – the gifts of Labour in power. And, throughout the '70s, it was common to hear that the working class was itself deeply divided. Women, black people and the unemployed began to assert and organise themselves, alongside community activists and outside the traditional labour movement.

In the lament for Labour's decline we must take stock of what has happened to the Left, to feminists and other erstwhile radicals, particularly over the last five years. Overwhelmingly, the majority of former activists are now *inside* the Labour Party – a chrysalis hoping to take wing. Their ideas and experience should be particularly useful in the struggles ahead, for it is issues of democracy and popular control which are likely to become the central themes for resistance to Thatcher in the next few years.

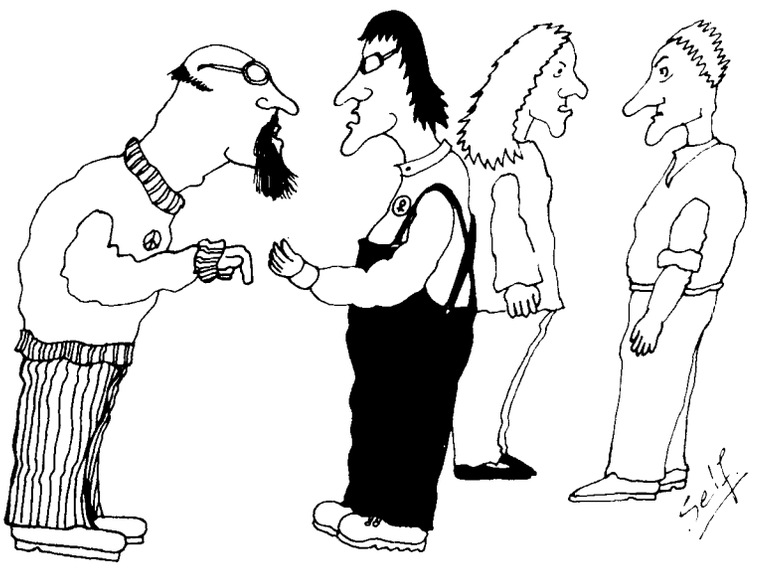
AS THE MORE LEFT Labour councils and metropolitan boroughs are forced to resist central government cuts in state funding and the limits placed on local rate funding, the question of services will become central. To be defended, they must be widely popular. Plans to decentralise services, fund more locally based self-help projects and change people's experience of welfare are some of the reforms already begun. These initiatives coming from the progressive Labour boroughs and constituency Labour parties cannot be dismissed as merely the exceptions to familiar Labour rule. They suggest ways of overcoming the weaknesses of the traditional Labour Party, left and right, which for decades has narrowly focused on parliamentarism, and ignored how you build a diverse and heterogeneous socialist movement.

Outside the Labour Party, most radical activists and left groupings have moved towards a more constructive, if understandably critical, support for Labour. They are more willing to acknowledge the potential for creating a politics and culture of resistance through the resources which can be made available by the policies of progressive Labour boroughs.

I am anything but indifferent to the electoral success of the Labour Party. Indeed, my ward in North Islington, reflecting the ideas of many of its new members, has already been doing almost everything that Peter Hain (*NS* 12 August) suggested. With a local newsletter, public meetings, open meetings, baby-sitting rotas, educationals, preparations for a street fete, regular door-to-door canvassing with (and monthly bulletins from) our successful new MP, morale is high. But a national Labour Party electoral victory in the near future looks increasingly unlikely unless we can create a new moral and intellectual climate for socialism. And, however unpalatable this may be to most of our Parliamentary Labour Party, this means a lot more than promises of increased production and a bigger slice of a larger cake – the ethic of successful capitalism.

IT HAS NOT entirely escaped some on the Left today that, alongside its own failure to make socialism the common sense of our age, feminism has been extraordinarily successful over the last 15 years in creating a changed moral and intellectual climate. This is partly a product of women's changed social situation, as nearly half of the paid workforce. But it does also reflect the power and appeal of much that feminists have said and done. Thinking through the situation of women today and strategies which would remove their social disadvantage is extremely instructive for socialists. Such strategies challenge some of the most sacred ethics and institutions of capitalism.

Divulging the hidden fabric of our daily lives – its complex power relations; its taken-for-granted injustice; its violence; its economic and emotional poverty – feminism has inspired many people way beyond its predominantly middle-class origins. What feminism has not been able to do, yet, is to change the lot of most women. More aware of violence and discrimination against women (and the shackles of gender) we clearly are, but more women are poorer today than they were 20 years ago – and, increasingly, women are poorer than men. Poverty has predominantly a female face. It is associated overwhelmingly with single



"THEY'RE ARGUING ABOUT WHICH ONE OF THEM IS THE GREATER STEREOTYPE . . ."

Will Self

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parent families, which are mostly female headed, and with the growing number of the elderly who live alone and are, again, mostly female.

Over the last 20 years there has been almost no increase in social provision for the essential non-paid caring and servicing work – four fifths of which is still done by women, whether or not they have jobs. When state welfare *is* available (for example, through the NHS) it embodies little of the best of home-based caring – being rigidly hierarchical and inflexible, creating passivity, dependence and powerlessness.

By contrast, the women's movement (and, to a lesser extent, the New Left) began from a concern with the personal, with how we care for each other in non-oppressive and creative ways. I believe such a focus is essential for any socialism which is going to reach people today. It is about seeing the connection between work and home, production and need, the public and the private, collective and individual responsibility. It is about convincing people that there is another way to organise society. Jobs could be related to personal and social need; shorter and more flexible 'working' hours could allow for loving, caring, cleaning and cooking to be shared between men and women, and society generally could take responsibility for providing the resources and facilities for such work to be not a burden, but something which can be enjoyed. Such a socialist welfare society would be one which always encouraged individual autonomy and the democratic control of all resources.

There was a time when some sections of the Labour Party did think in terms of more community based services, and of co-operatives and workers' control. They were influenced, for example, by Eleanor Rathbone's plans in the 1920s for community networks of mutual aid, and by the then flourishing Women's Co-operative Guild and the co-operative movement. That was before the Labour Party's conversion into little more than a well-oiled electoral machine. But, now that Labour electoralism has failed even in its own terms, we must think afresh how to dispel Labour's image as a party of bureaucratic management.

There are already initiatives, and practical socialist-feminist strategies, to build on. For example, accepting that the private, domestic sphere is essential for production and wellbeing, the GLC is looking into 'collective' methods of child care; food production; the care of the elderly, sick and disabled. One exemplary project being considered is the Norwood Children's Centre Co-op, which aims to include laundry facilities, the provision of meals, the bulk-buying of food alongside child-care, after-school clubs, childminders' support groups and a family planning clinic. Such projects not only create useful jobs, but illustrate the possibility for alternative forms of welfare, which strengthen, rather than remove, people's political power. They are the seed bed for a socialist Britain. □

Lynne Segal is a co-author of Beyond the Fragments *and has recently edited* What is to be done about the family, *published by Penguin Books in association with the Socialist Society, £2.50.*

FEEDBACK

Right to a home

Chris Holmes, Chair, Labour Housing Group

Since the general election, there have been persistent suggestions that the Labour Party should drop its opposition to the Conservative Party's policies on council house sales. Barry Hindess (*NS* 5 August) appears to endorse this in his comment that 'Labour cannot afford to forget that many working people are also owner-occupiers, and that many who are not would dearly like to be if only they could afford it'. Yet he omits any recognition of the ways in which these aspirations are shaped by the totally inequitable financial privileges of owner-occupation.

It is impossible to substantiate a claim that the Labour Party's policies have been 'anti-home ownership'. It was Labour governments which brought in the option mortgage scheme, started special savings schemes for first-time buyers and introduced the mortgage support scheme with building societies. The Labour Party manifesto in this election promised new measures to end the solicitors' conveyancing monopoly, to introduce a unified house purchase service and to help first-time buyers.

Above all, the Labour Party has continued to support the massive benefits to home owners through mortgage tax relief and exemptions from capital taxation. The valid socialist criticism is not that the Labour Party has discriminated against home owners, but that it has sustained inequality through supporting tax concessions which benefit disproportionately the better off and the already well-housed.

The myth persists that council tenants are 'feather-bedded', while owner-occupiers are 'crippled by high mortgage payments'. The truth is that it is owner-occupiers who benefit from extraordinarily generous tax relief, while subsidies to council tenants have been virtually eliminated.

In 1982/83 the cost of mortgage tax relief exceeded £2,000 million. The cost of exemption of owner-occupied housing from capital gains tax was officially estimated at £3,000 million. The value of *discounts* to council tenants buying their homes was £1,400 million. In contrast, the cost of subsidies to council tenants has been more than halved since 1979 and, in 1982/83, was less than £1,000 million.

The arguments against the Tory 'right to buy' policies need to be re-stated clearly and firmly. Over the four years from 1979-83 public expenditure on housing was cut in half; rents more than doubled; the level of new house building collapsed to the lowest level since World War II. The 'right to buy' legislation in the 1980 Housing Act forced all councils to sell, regardless of the demand for rented accommodation in their areas and at massive discounts on market value. The benefits have been gained primarily by the better-off council tenants, living in houses with gardens, in the more attractive areas. The costs have been borne by those tenants in less desirable council homes – or no home at all – as rents have soared and the stock of rented homes has been reduced.

These policies, as pursued by the Conservative government, have been inegalitarian, divisive and socially damaging. Opposition to them cannot be characterised as prejudiced dogma.

Yet it is also not surprising that the 'right to buy' policies have proved popular with those able to take advantage. Tenants who buy are able to benefit from the discounts, tax relief on mortgage interest payments and the long-term prospect of an appreciating capital asset. If they were to stay as tenants, the future would be ever higher rents and none of those advantages. On top of that, there are also far too often petty restrictions on what tenants can do with their homes and intolerable delays in getting repairs done.

By failing to tackle these fundamental issues, the Labour Party has let itself be pushed back into a negative posture – saying 'no' to those who want to buy, yet failing to offer a credible and attractive alternative. Opposition to the 'right to buy' can often appear paternalistic – and hypocritical, too, when argued by those who are already comfortable home owners.

Labour should be responding to these difficulties not by capitulation to Tory policies, but by putting forward a socialist housing programme which offers more choice to those who want to buy and those who want to rent their homes.

The criticism of the Tory policies on council house sales is not that home ownership is undesirable, but that the policy is selective and based on the false assumption that owning a home is intrinsically superior to renting. When such an ideology is reinforced by massive financial advantages, it is inevitable that other types of tenure will become stigmatised as inferior.

The 'right to buy' can be justified if there is also a 'right to rent'. *All* members of the community should be entitled to expect access to a home and to *choose* between different tenures of *equal* status. There should be no more restrictions on the provision of homes to rent than there are on the purchase or construction of homes for sale.

We need to work out the implications of this approach – in terms of the reform of housing finance, the running of Council housing, plans for housing investment and the policies of housing allocation – and then campaign with vigour and conviction. It would be foolish to underestimate the difficulties of repudiating the myths and prejudices about home ownership and council housing. Yet the Labour Party cannot simply accept the 'right to buy' on the terms of current Tory policies. We must, instead, advance the wider belief in the 'right to a home' for all members of the community.

See also Letters pp 19 & 20. Feedback contributions should be no longer than 900 words.

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DIARY

Angela Carter

Florence

At six o'clock in the evening, as the day cools, this street turns into Little Old Ladyland. Out they come, the iron grannies, with their kitchen chairs, their knitting and their palm leaf fans, to police the neighbourhood until around ten, when they trot off to bed. Though often, far into the night, you can see an insomniac old face behind the shutters, checking up on the youth who hang out on the pavements until two or three. During prime Grannytime, a flea couldn't fart in San Frediano without the fact being noted and its significance commented upon. Walking to the corner shop past them and then walking back again is to run the gauntlet twice. Their finely honed eyes can spot a pregnancy before the egg knew what hit it. Adultery? They keep mental flow-charts of the extra-marital comings and going of the district tacked on to the walls of their minds.

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You don't need Italian to know what gives with these old ladies, you only need a knowledge of the mores of close-knit working-class communities everywhere. My gran would have felt at home among them. What keeps them so spry and chipper? Why, poking their noses into other people's affairs! The only exercise they get. By the look of them, it's enough. I made the mistake of smiling at a row of them. Conciliatory, only-here-for-the-holidays smile. However, sufficient to unleash the floodgates. Babble of demotic Tuscan; again, no interpreter needed – 'where are you from, how long are you staying, how long have you been married, *he's* never your husband, etc, etc.' Whence comes this egregious sentimentality of the British left for the rich life that flourished in mean streets? That Jeremy Seabrook has a lot to answer for. Living in *this* street must be like living in an ongoing kangaroo court. Some of the more repellent aspects of Maoist village organisation, setting neighbour to spy on neighbour, encouraging neighbour to tell neighbour just what they think of them, surely all this is no more than putting age-old proletarian folkways at the service of the state.

○

Since San Frediano is close to the centre of Florence and the houses are old and pretty, if run-down and bathless, the streets picturesque, if largely used as front parlours, the district is gentrifying. We're staying in the exquisitely gentrified apartment of a friend. Not that San Frediano is gentrifying rapidly. The locals are putting up a valiant fight: if you don't like the lifestyle, you can just bugger off. Not that they're rude or violent about it. They just make no concessions. There's an indifference to the newcomers to match the indifference of the newcomers and, at the hint of a crack in that indifference, the hideous threat – that the grannies will forthwith engulf you in the stifling embrace of the community.

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All the same, as city neighbourhoods go, San Frediano is a pretty terrific place. Within a hundred yard radius of this apartment are a dozen shops, not one of which sells things that are not useful. Grocer, greengrocer, butcher, baker, hardware store, chemist. Two or three auto-repair workshops, apparently carved out of people's front rooms. A couple of bars. The local Communist Party office is over the way. In the Piazzo Torquato Tasso, at the top of the road, is a tennis court, and a sandpit with swings and a roundabout. Also a patch of tussocky grass with a few trees, where people relax after they come out of the house again when the siesta hour is over, where babies are aired, where dogs are walked. Where the overspill from the corner café congregates. Kids pop-pop around on motor scooters. This is the positive side of your close-knit, working-class community; the busy, tranquil square exudes the air of urban pastoral. A marble memorial slab is fenced off in a tiny garden. There are some big bouquets of dusty immortelles in front of it and one or two little bunches of fresh dahlias and gladioli in jam jars. The monument commemorates the 15 or so residents of the district who were shot in the Piazzo Tasso by the Germans the day before Florence was liberated in 1944. Some of the men

and women taking the evening air, here, must be the brothers and sisters, the children, the nephews and nieces of those who were killed. Since one of the victims was a boy of eight, and some others were not much older, probably mothers and fathers, too, sit fanning themselves with copies of *Unita*. It seems entirely appropriate they should have transformed the place of execution into that of repose and recreation. Their wellbeing is the best revenge. It occurs to me the Italians learned the difference between socialism and national socialism the hard way.

○

What bliss, by the way, to be in a republic. The older I grow, the more the British monarchy strikes me as an affront to reason, sensitivity and good taste. I do not become reconciled. I am shocked and surprised to find how few British people, even self-confessed radicals, take the cause of republicanism in our country seriously. Perhaps they all secretly hope to be knights and dames when they grow up. All the arguments for the retention of the British monarchy are flawed, self-deceiving and spurious. All the same, republicanism, like anti-clericism, is a cause that has never really got off the ground in Britain. Why *is* this? For myself, I am a dedicated believer in the old anarchist dictum: 'Until the last king is strangled with the guts of the last priest, mankind will never be free.' (I may misquote, it may be vice versa, but the message is the same.)

○

A propos of which, Luis Buñuel is dead. Slipped his moorings last month, evidently. Now the glutinous tributes start. The BBC showed *Los Olvidados* (in English *The Young and the Damned*) last week. A movie about urban deprivation that has lost none of its relevance since 1950, when it was made. If anything, it has gained some. It was the first grown-up film I ever saw, at the Classic, Tooting, in 1957. I thought, then: 'This is how art should be!' I think so now. Buñuel died peacefully at the ripe old age of 83, which only goes to show there *isn't* a God.

ROGER WODDIS

Dummy run

Mr Ron Neal, a former accountant, now redundant, is getting £40 a week from the government to become a ventriloquist, under the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.

Well done, Ron! You didn't snivel
When banished to the windy street.
You told them, being a gutsy chap,
'Just put a dummy on my lap
And watch me stand on my own two feet.'

Instead of whining and talking drivel,
You realised your secret dream:
A line of gags – a lump of wood –
Are all you need for making good,
Plus forty quid from a ripping Scheme.

You've shown us all a path to follow,
A splendid way to conquer fear:
When endless strain made others ill,
You smiled and took the proffered pill
And washed it down with a gottle of geer.

And those who find it hard to swallow
Should grit their teeth and carry on,
Remembering another doll
With corn-blue eyes and flaxen poll,
Who mouths the lines of another Ron.

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State of the unions

As a Dallas air traffic controller is imprisoned for his part in the '81 strike, Denis MacShane investigates unions in Texas

Dallas

THE YOUNG BLACK reporter rubbed her back uncomfortably against the courthouse wall. Her swollen belly testified to her eight-month pregnancy – but, with nowhere to sit as we waited outside the Tarrant County courthouse in Forth Worth, Texas, she had to shift from foot to foot as time went by. I asked her how much maternity leave she would get from her newspaper. 'Well, with all my annual holidays and accumulated sick leave, I reckon about two months before, during and after,' was the reply. What kind of a journalists' union had negotiated a deal like that, I asked, remembering NUJ forays into maternity leave agreements a decade ago. 'There's no newspaper union in Fort Worth, honey,' she said, as if I had asked a remarkably silly question.

Perhaps I had, since both she and I were in Forth Worth earlier this summer to witness a remarkable sight – the jailing of an American trade unionist for taking part in an unsuccessful strike two years ago.

Ron May is hardly the material of trade union martyrdom. A friendly, chubby, all-American 35-year-old, with wife Sharon and teenage children Valerie and Greg, he was working as an air traffic controller at the world's biggest airport, Dallas-Fort Worth, when, in August 1981, his union, PATCO, went on strike. This was partly for more pay, but mainly over concern about safety standards. The issues of the strike hardly matter now, but President Reagan's reaction was savage. The strike was declared illegal; all 11,500 striking air traffic controllers were dismissed, military strike-breakers were brought in; the union was decertified and heavily fined. In Texas, local judges took their cue from Reagan's reaction and Ron May was among three controllers given 90-day prison sentences.

After two years of twisting through America's judicial system, his time had run out. Watched by his family, three local reporters and half a dozen former air traffic controllers, he surrendered himself and was taken away to the federal correction institute to serve his sentence. A trade unionist had become a criminal. His union no longer exists. His imprisonment rated no national media coverage at all, a fact that his wife contrasted bitterly with the folk hero status afforded to Polish workers who assert trade union rights.

Texas, like 20 other, mainly southern US states, is a 'union-free' state. That does not mean there are no unions in such states, but it does mean there are a host of state laws which make it much more difficult to organise. There is no welcome for trade union organisers. In a bid to carry the fading torch of northern industrial trade unionism to the South, the one million-strong United Auto Workers union decided to hold its triennial convention in Dallas (a decision which cost them their favourite speaker, since Senator Edward Kennedy has refused to set foot in the city since November 1963). Despite the presence and spending money of 2,500 delegates and a further thousand guests, journalists and hangers-on, the welcome from the city was non-existent.

In fact, Dallas had its own special reception for the delegates, in the form of decoy prostitutes who, according to a UAW warning card, 'are policewomen dressed as prostitutes. They are on the streets, in the bars, hotel lobbies and in business places. When accosted, arrests are made and court action follows.'

While the Dallas policewomen were extending their Texas welcome, the UAW was pondering the future of American trades unionism in a hall only a few hundred yards away from the famous school-book depository.

1981: picketing federal government offices

AP

THE UAW WAS BORN out of the great occupation strikes and violent fights with Ford and General Motors thugs in the 1930s. It has pursued a more radical and imaginative course than many US unions and managed to keep its distance from the right-wing style of labour leaders like George Meaney. But all the union's eggs were – and still, mainly, are – in the automobile industry basket.

The US auto industry produced and sold eight million cars in 1978. Now, despite the whoopee of revived sales and profits announced by Ford, GM, and Chrysler, the industry is producing 2.4 million fewer cars. Half a million autoworkers' jobs have disappeared, as Japanese imports and the Reagan recession have cut back domestic sales. To try to outflank the growing protectionist calls in Congress, some Japanese auto companies are setting up plants in America. But they are doing so in 'union-free' states like Tennessee, where Nissan has refused to come to a deal with the UAW. At a Honda plant in Ohio, workers were disciplined for coming to work wearing UAW badges and tee-shirts.

The autoworkers' union, like those of the steelworkers and miners, was born out of the reaction against craft union mentality that dominated official US labour thinking and organisation 50 years ago. But now industrial trade unionism, which was hailed as progressive and radical in its time, is seen to be far from sufficient.

This was to be seen a few hundred miles south of Dallas in Brownsville, on the Rio Grande border with Mexico. The work in the area mainly comes from labouring on the large corporate-owned farms. Again, the recession has hit hard. I counted ten second-hand and pawn shops in the town's main street. On the outskirts, immigrant farm workers live in shacks while their children play barefoot in the dust. Every village store has a large notice announcing that it accepts food stamps.

Inside one store, there was no fresh fruit on sale and the storekeeper said that most people bought packaged white bread and a fatty sausage called boloney which is filling, and very cheap. Median family incomes in the Rio Grande valley are $8,500, compared with the national median family income of $20,000. Naturally, there are no unions organising farm workers in Brownsville.

Compared with a South Texas farm labourer, even an unemployed autoworker in Michigan is well off. But as Reaganomics continues to bite into the industries where US unions have been strong since the war, and while companies and states grow more aggressively anti-union, some radical, fresh thinking is required in terms of organising America's working class – if the sight of middle-class civil servants being jailed for going on strike, or pregnant women having to work until their waters break, or farm workers exchanging food stamps for bread and sausage, does not spread out of Texas and Dixieland to become the norm all over the United States. □

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CHINA

Making friends

Jonathan Mirsky on China's new global vision

MAO ZEDONG used to boast that, after a global nuclear exchange – the inevitable result of capitalism's terminal crisis – there would be plenty of Chinese left alive to rebuild socialism. The late chairman's heirs, who do not share his taste for disaster, no longer believe that a Third World war is just around the corner.

'It will be possible to postpone and prevent the outbreak of a new world war,' says Zong He of Beijing's Institute for International Strategic Studies. A colleague, Pei Monong of the Research Institute on International Problems, is more pessimistic – the capitalist crisis may still bring the whole roof down – but even he finally decides that 'a world war is by no means inevitable'. Both men write in the journal *World Knowledge*, in which nothing occurs which has not been vetted for orthodoxy.

One Maoist vision which has been revived, however, is of China as the model and spokesperson for the Third World. This comes after Beijing's disappointment with the US as a potential shield against the USSR and a source of modernising Good Things. Ronald Reagan's preoccupations with Taiwan and his unwillingness, until last month, to supply the Chinese with the latest computer technology have cooled the romance which began with the 1972 Mao-Nixon handshake. Equally cooling has been China's recognition that American technology is dear and rapidly obsolescent.

In any event, the need for American protection diminished as Brezhnev's initiatives sounded increasingly credible in Beijing. Negotiations began last winter, after the historic handshake between Andropov and China's then foreign minister, Huang Hua.

But, although China is constantly discussing and negotiating with both Moscow and Washington, nowadays its main energies abroad focus on poorer, weaker and smaller countries. No matter how paltry they may appear internationally, or how shaky their domestic grip, all Third World leaders can be certain, when they visit Beijing, that they will meet the top leaders, enjoy state banquets and walk on many a red carpet.

All such leaders are treated like major political leaders. When Prime Minister Lini of Vanatu – a South Pacific microdot – called on Premier Zhao Ziyang, the Chinese press release said that they had discussed 'international issues of common concern, including Kampuchea'. What Lini had to contribute towards a solution of the Indochina tangle is unclear; but he went home with the details of a Chinese trade agreement in his briefcase.

Where the Chinese feel everyone is on their side is in the world-wide struggle against 'superpower hegemonism' – the attempt by the US and the USSR to impose their will on other nations and regions.

Everyone hates hegemonism, the Chinese contend; virtually all the Third World countries except for one or two running dogs of the Russians, like the Cubans and the Vietnamese; most of the Second World ones do, too, including the EEC, Canada and Japan.

What is it which links Iran, Afghanistan, the Malvinas (Beijing supported the Argentine against the UK), the EEC and the Soviet-European gaspipeline? According to *World Knowledge* it is 'the rapid development of more independent Third and Second World powers *vis-à-vis* the waning influence of the two Superpowers'.

THE SUPERPOWERS, in this conception, may be still dangerous, but they are up against a grand alliance. As Premier Zhao explained it, the Chinese 'fully support' Pol Pot against Hanoi's clients in Kampuchea; Afghanistan against the USSR; the Arabs (especially the Palestinians) against Israel; Namibia against South Africa; Central America against 'foreign intervention'.

This last is tricky. The Chinese concede that the US has had a long, malign effect in the Caribbean – but, last week, the *People's Daily* went after the Russians for 'making use of the national democratic movements in Central America to reach their goal of expansion and penetration'.

The superpowers, despite their mischief making, are running out of steam, the Chinese insist. Even their frantic arms selling abroad is counterproductive: it provides their clients with the means to assert their independence in the face of increasing demands for loyalty from Moscow and Washington.

The US suffered defeats in Korea and in Vietnam (the Chinese, not too secretly, take much of the credit for these victories, especially for the latter, as their relationship with Hanoi deteriorates) and has seen its SEATO and CENTO military pacts disintegrate. The American economy is threatened by the EEC and Japan.

For their part, the Russians have lost their overriding authority in the international communist movement and stand revealed as bullies in Afghanistan and puppet masters in Vietnam. Here again, the Chinese preen themselves for having led the way in exposing the USSR.

China, indeed, is determined never again to be a card in the high-stakes game between Moscow and Washington. What it seeks is less demanding relations with the EEC and Japan, which can help the Chinese modernise, and friendship with even the smallest countries, like Vanatu, from which little can be expected except cooperation in international agencies.

Once the superpowers weaken sufficiently, it is argued in Beijing, a new multipolar system will emerge, led by the EEC, Japan – and China. The Chinese claim, with some justification, that such a system will act with more restraint than the one dominated by the Americans and the Russians. But only globally. The Chinese are great ones for contradictions and observe that, under the future order, there will be more medium and small-scale wars. *World Knowledge* does not tackle the possibility of a 'medium war' in which one or both of the adversaries possess nuclear weapons and decide to use them. □

SRI LANKA

Hired thugs

Amrit Wilson on Jayawardene's role in anti-Tamil violence

THE NEAR GENOCIDE of Tamils in Sri Lanka has been depicted by the British press as two groups of black people savagely attacking and killing each other to the horror and inconvenience of British tourists. It is a picture that Sri Lanka's government would altogether approve – with President Jayawardene claiming that he did not know of the army's attacks on civilians. But, gradually, with eyewitness accounts, telephone information and fact sheets coming clandestinely out of the country, a picture is building up which not only implicates leading members of the government and their associates, but suggests a planned and well coordinated operation reminiscent of the CIA-fomented 'race riots' in Guyana in 1964.

Of these reports and fact sheets, two of the most detailed and carefully researched come from a solidarity group in the Netherlands, the Stichting Sri Lanka Weskgroep, whose members have just returned from Sri Lanka, and from an all-party group of mainly Sinhalese observers based in the country. Both come to the same conclusions – that the violence was deliberately started by the government and was carried out through the use of thugs, controlled and organised by members of a faction of the UNP ruling party close to Premadasa, the prime minister.

The British media, fed mainly through Sri Lankan government sources, have told us that the riots were triggered off by Sinhalese anger at the killing of 13 soldiers by Tamil terrorists. But both the Sinhalese all-party group and the Dutch organisation produce evidence to the contrary. Censorship, they point out, had been imposed in early June, ostensibly to defuse the possibly inflammatory effects of terrorist activity. But it was deliberately lifted to communicate the news of the murders of the soldiers (who, in fact, had been ambushed by guerrillas after the gang rape of three Tamil schoolgirls by their unit). Information about the ambush (but not the rapes), the names of the dead sol-

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diers and the date of their proposed cremation was placed by the government information department in most major newspapers. The bodies, which were not handed over directly to relatives, were then brought to Colombo and cremated in the main cemetery in front of a large gathering. The next day, gangs of thugs were out on the streets and the attacks started.

These thugs have been an increasingly important part of the Sri Lankan political scene over the last few years. They are like storm troopers, employed by right-wing politicians and used freely at election time to intimidate, for example, voters. Earlier this year, as the Dutch group points out in its report, at least two MPs went in person to police stations to release their thugs, who had been arrested for attacking political opponents. In the present violence, the army, police and gangs of thugs acted in conjunction.

According to the report from the Sinhalese all-party group, 'small gangs of men provided with householders lists burned Tamil houses and flats (in Sinhalese-owned buildings, only the contents of Tamil homes were destroyed). They did this expertly, within sight of the President's house, a few yards away from the prime minister's residence, in blocks adjacent to or opposite police stations – taking care, on a hot dry morning, not to start fires which would spread to adjoining Sinhalese or State-owned property. Accidents and violations of discipline were few. Some of us saw truck loads of soldiers cheering on the arsonists' bands.'

In Mount Lavina, a suburb of Colombo, thugs were led by UNP Councillor Tissa Abeysekara. In Jaela and Wattala, Joseph Michael, deputy minister of Labour, was seen leading his thugs. In the Maradana area of Colombo, thugs brought in from up to 100 miles away (and loyal to Premadasa, to M. H. Mohamed the transport minister and to Cyril Matthew, Minister of Industries) were identified by eye witnesses.

As the Netherlands group comments, there were some remarkable similarities to the post-election violence of 1977. But this time, with over 1,000 dead and 80,000 held under appalling conditions in refugee camps (where essential medical aid is kept locked up in government warehouses), violence by far exceeds that of any previous phase. The move to the North is resulting in an enforced and unprecedented division of the country – effectively into Tamil and Sinhalese areas. This, together with the government's ominous announcement that it will take over all damaged property in the South, suggests that the repression is likely to continue and, possibly, intensify.

The crisis has already meant the rise to prominence of officials and ministers close to the right wing of the UNP. A particularly interesting appointment is that of Douglas Liyanage, secretary to the Minister of State. Liyanage was involved in a right-wing, allegedly CIA-backed army coup against Mrs Bandaranaike's government in 1961.

As the Netherlands group put it, Jayawardene, 'the miracle man who combined democracy with development and economic growth in a world of recession, has now jettisoned democracy and openly set on the road taken by Marcos and Lee Kwan Yew'. What the last few weeks have shown is that he is not in sole control down this road. □

PHILIPPINES

Death in Manila

Claudia Wright asks whether Aquino returned to the Philippines with US support

Washington

WHEN BENIGNO AQUINO, the former Philippines senator, was gunned down at Manila airport last Sunday, 21 August, the assassination extinguished more than a popular Filipino voice.

Aquino's return was the opening move of what he himself saw as the transition from the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos to a parliamentary democracy, bypassing the more radical Filipino opposition and the guerrillas of the New People's Army. Aquino thought that his strategy was backed by the State Department officials with whom he had regularly spoken during his last year in the US. His assassination elminates the possibility of a successor to Marcos that the US might approve – other than the President's wife, Imelda Marcos. She is the one who gains most from Aquino's murder.

Ferdinand Marcos is dying. Some say he has a kidney ailment, others that he has lupus disease. No one knows when he will succumb, but speculation about when, and hope that it will be soon, are the popular tribute to the Philippines' tyrant.

In a conversation last January, Aquino told me that he expected Imelda Marcos, her son Ferdinand Junior and their allies to take power quite soon. But he thought that they would not last for long, that the Filipino military would step in, remove the Marcos family and rule directly – at the same time intensifying the war against the guerrillas. This, as Aquino also told US officials, would mean long-term instability for the country, with no guarantee that, in the end, military rule – and the US bases in the Philippines – would be secure.

There was an alternative, Aquino suggested – a 'middle way' for the Americans between the unstable dictatorship of Madame Marcos, a military junta and an anti-American revolution that would evict the US from its bases. That alternative was the formation, on Marcos's death, of a transition government composed of opposition figures like Aquino.

Talk of the succession to Marcos is, Americans say, as normal as rice. But Aquino believed there was a good chance that the US would facilitate the transfer of power by pressing Marcos to allow the National Assembly elections to take place in March 1984, without the fraud and chicanery that marked the last Presidential election. Aquino told Filipino associates that he had to return home now if he was to be effective in the parliamentary election campaign.

Several years ago, Aquino was asked how the lessons of the Pacific revolutionary movements – the early Hukbalahap insurgency in the Philippines, the Malayan insurgency, the Vietnam war – might apply to his own political strategy. His answer was simple and optimistic. It would be possible, he said, to organise the revolution in the Philippines from the top down. A popularly elected President – he meant himself – could implement land reform and the redistribution of wealth without resorting to insurrection.

Three months ago, the Marcos and Reagan governments signed an agreement to renew the American use of bases at Subic Bay and Clark air field, in return for which the US offered $900 million in military and economic grants and loans over the next five years. By State Department calculation, however, even that amount will not be enough to halt the economy's slide.

Low copra and coconut oil prices, on which most Filipino farmers depend, high import costs and the drying up of local capital were identified, in a classified State Department analysis of April 1982, as likely to lead to worsening economic conditions and an upsurge in military activity by the NPA and the Moslem Moro National Liberation Front. 'Whatever is good there may only be temporary', the US consul reported from Cebu, 'and whatever is bad may only get worse.'

Aquino genuinely thought that he could persuade the US to shift its allegiance from the Marcos family to himself – in the interest of the US. That belief was criticised as naïve by other Filipino exiles.

On his last Friday before leaving Boston, Aquino telephoned the State Department to bid farewell to the deputy director of the Office of Philippine Affairs. Did Aquino believe that US officials would obtain assurances of his safety from the Marcos régime? Was Aquino counting on Congressman Stephen Solarz, the sympathetic chairman of the House subcommittee on Asian and Pacific affairs, to plead his case when he met Marcos just before Aquino was due to arrive? Did Aquino imagine that middle-level State Department men and Congressional chairmen have the power to deter the Marcos regime – or persuade the Reagan administration to put its money on Aquino, rather than on Madame Marcos, for the long run?

In 1982, Madame Marcos gave President and Mrs Reagan a vibrating electric chair with a vibrating stool to match (see *NS* 19 August). She also presented Vice-President and Mrs Bush with a motorised massage chair. So it is just possible that, as news of Aquino's assassination reached the US on Sunday, the heads of the American government were being lulled to sleep in Madame Marcos's chairs and experienced no other frissons. □

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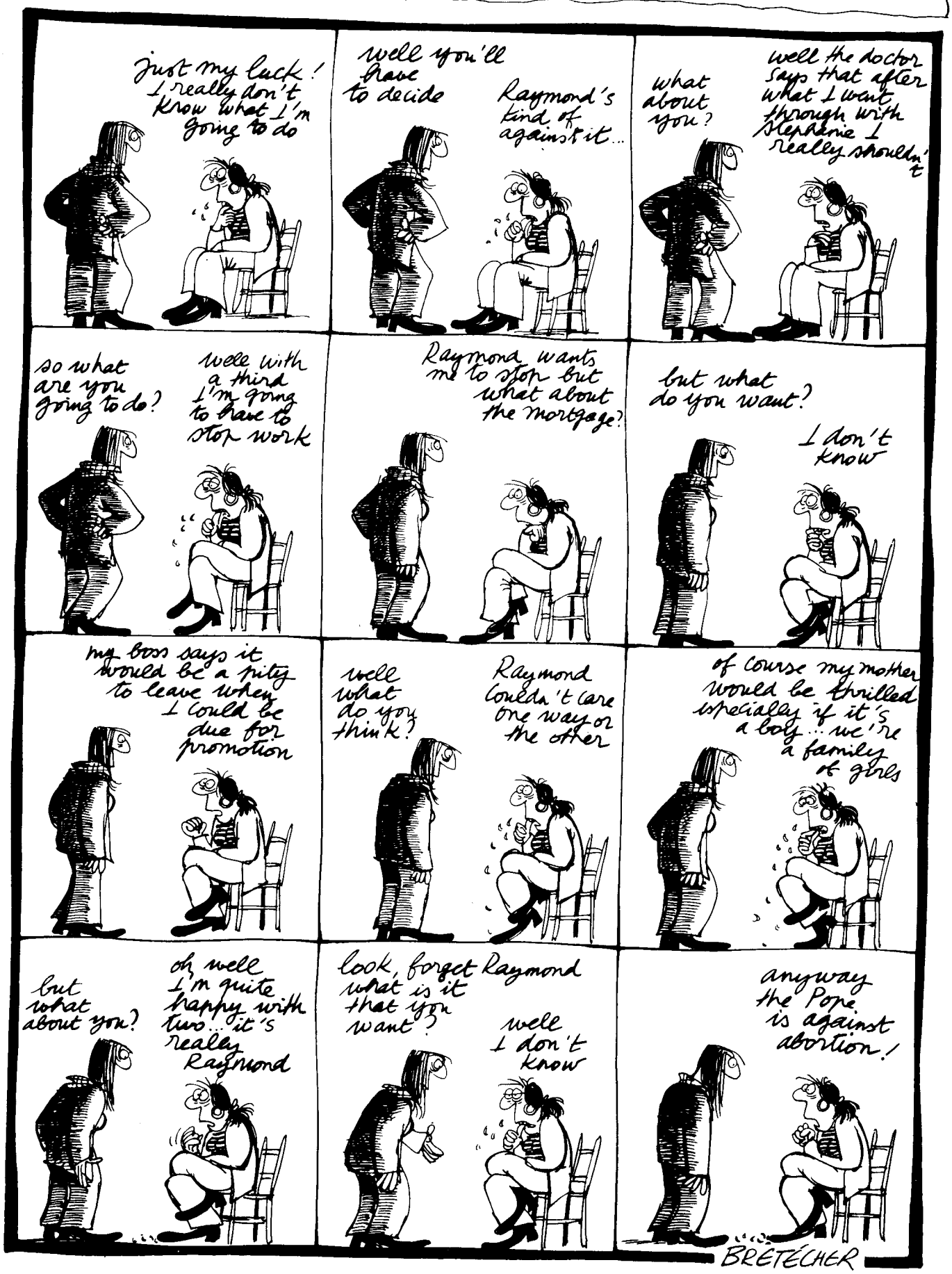
BRETÉCHER

TOTA MULIER


Just my luck! I really don't know what I'm going to do
well you'll have to decide
Raymond's kind of against it...
what about you?
well the doctor says that after what I went through with Stephanie I really shouldn't
so what are you going to do?
well with a third I'm going to have to stop work
Raymond wants me to stop but what about the mortgage?
but what do you want?
I don't know
my boss says it would be a pity to leave when I could be due for promotion
well what do you think?
Raymond couldn't care one way or the other
of course my mother would be thrilled especially if it's a boy... we're a family of girls
but what about you?
oh well I'm quite happy with two... it's really Raymond
look, forget Raymond what is it that you want?
well I don't know
anyway the Pope is against abortion!
BRETÉCHER

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LETTERS

Law and order

Geoff Coggan, PROP

Four years ago, the *New Statesman* made a powerful contribution to the exposure of the MUFTI squad's assault on Wormwood Scrubs prisoners. It is good to see the paper again taking up the prison issue in a detailed manner (*NS* 12 August). However, the word 'riot' does need to be used more carefully if Home Office myths are not to be perpetuated. Hull was a riot, so too was Gartree in 1978 and there have since been others – all for very good reasons. But the only riotous element at Wormwood Scrubs D wing in 1979 were prison officers.

Similarly, I was sorry to see your acceptance of the Home Office mythology that the recent Albany riot 'shows the explosive effect of keeping IRA prisoners . . . in the same place as "ordinary" long term prisoners'. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that the long-term jails would be any more peaceful if all the Irish prisoners were to be repatriated tomorrow – as, of course, they should be if the government is to follow the logic of its newly stated intentions to seek the repatriation of its own nationals in foreign prisons. Indeed, the anomaly whereby prisoners in northern Ireland get their sentences half remitted (as against one-third remission elsewhere in the UK) would then become an even sharper grievance than it is today.

Finally, it really will not do to write of the law and order problem as if it exists solely, or even mainly, in the eyes of the Tory party conference. Antisocial behaviour is endemic to western 'developed' societies and the chief sufferers are the working class, who take the full brunt of the antisocial measures of government and the market economy *as well as* the individualised antisocial behaviour which they spawn.

Only if and when a Labour government embraces socialist policies will it have the slightest chance of curbing the rise in the crime rate or many of the other malignant by-products of a greed-motivated society. The fear is that the Labour Party, in power, will have no such intentions and will be as tempted as it has always been to meet the wholly understandable 'law and order' requirements of its own supporters with the pretence that penal and policing policies, of whatever hue, can significantly affect the situation. It was, after all, Merlyn Rees who (in 1972) made the inept statement that 'a sign of success in the fight for law and order is that more people are in prison' which is akin to assessing success in the struggle against disease by the numbers of people in hospital.

Frantic father from Fife

Jonathan Wills, Fife

Much as I enjoy Anna Coote's writing, methinks she went a wee bit over the score in her First Person piece (*NS* 19 August). What is all this stuff about 'modern enthusiasts for parenthood who so subtly oppress their women', these (unnamed) men who want children, 'exulting in the newborn, cuddling the baby, playing with the toddler, changing nappies, giving baths, reading stories – and then sloping off to do something indefinably more urgent'?

I change a mean nappy myself and had not previously realised that I was acting as an oppressor in wanting children and exulting in them. Now I feel guilty, particularly as I am still on speaking terms with the elder of the two, who at nine has perceived that his father has feet of clay and cannot get anything right.

If you had a decent agony column I would write to it for advice. Should I stop doing the washing up, leave the feeding of the young to my partner in this vale of tears, let someone else take the brat to school and stop giving good night cuddles to my oafs (oaves?)?

What might this 'indefinably more urgent' something be, to which we frail menfolk are wont to slope off? Might it, in many households, be the urgent necessity, in this unfair world, to go out and earn some money so that the joint account (perhaps they're wrong, too) may splash out on more nappies?

I have tried to be a feminist but if we are to be rewarded with this radical separatist claptrap I may start sympathising with less enlightened brethren who long ago said, 'you're on your own, girls.'

APEX membership

Keith Standring, Assistant General Secretary, Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical & Computer Staff

It is not surprising that Geraldine Hackett (*NS* 19 August) finds it 'hard to believe' that with APEX affiliating to the TUC on a membership of 112,000, the union 'only lost 11,000' members in the past twelve months. The truth is that she got her facts wrong and did not even have the basic courtesy to check her story with APEX.

APEX is affiliating to the TUC this year on a membership figure of *109,155*. This represents a drop from the previous figure of 13,484, or 11 per cent. Indeed, had it not been for the fact that we recruited over 10,000 new members during that period our affiliation figure would have been even smaller. The fall in our membership compares closely with the drop in the TGWU membership of 11.4 per cent and with the rise in unemployment over a comparable period of 10.8 per cent. At the same time two unions with a similar spread of membership to APEX showed smaller falls in their membership. AUEW-TASS's membership has fallen by 'only' 7.3 per cent while that of ASTMS has fallen by just 4.1 per cent. Why not comment on their figures?

Why single out APEX for special mention? Our membership figures are accurate, audited and certainly not manipulated. To suggest otherwise is a slur on our staff who compile the figures. Still, why let facts ruin a story.

Making reds see green

Tony Jones, Campaigns Director, Ecology Party

Dave Elliott, in 'Making Greens See Red' (*NS* 19 August) offers a hopeful view of the possibilities for the 'greening' of socialism. I hope that the following thoughts will be taken in the spirit of cooperation that he so rightly called for between those from the green and red edges of politics.

One comment I have is that Dave Elliott fails to distinguish between conservationists and, for want of a better term, what I would call 'political ecologists'. Many of the former, often active in established pressure groups such as the Conservation Society and The Council For The Protection of Rural England would not, I imagine, care to be associated with the far-reaching and fundamental political, social and economic changes upon which the 'green' political future must be based. Unfortunately, at the moment, conservation has a wider public appeal than green politics.

This is not to claim that the Ecology Party is the repository of all 'green wisdom', far from it. But what I think Eco can lay claim to is a thorough-going 'green' political analysis, which is both overtly political and refreshingly realistic about the problems we all face in promoting the green alternative.

Dave Elliott also seems to think it a problem that greens focus their attack on the system of industrialisation. But surely the problem we all face *is* industrialism, and critically to examine that is not 'turning the clock back' but looking forward to the creation of a sustainable economy. In looking forward to that sort of 'new economic order' we must not be afraid to say plainly what was (and is) wrong with the old order and face the fact that this *will* mean wiping the slate clean in many areas and thereby writing off the 'stored labour' that has been invested in particular projects. After all, you cannot reappropriate a nuclear power station – the only good nuclear power station is a decommisioned one.

Unqualified architects

Michael Manser, President, Royal Institute of British Architects

I have just come across your issue of 5 August 1983 and the piece entitled 'Bentleys and helicopters' by Jules Lubbock.

It labours at length but makes only three points: that the author dislikes modern architecture and architects; that 'qualified' architects have 'a pecuniary interest in the destruction of architecture and communities' and are trained to this end; that 'unqualified' architects have always been 'the most imaginative and humane architectural thinkers'. He gives as examples Alberti, Ruskin and Colin Ward.

It is naïve (and deceitful) to describe Alberti and Ruskin as unqualified. Formal training and qualification, as Mr Lubbock knows well, were not available before the end of the 19th century. It was demanded by society to protect itself from untrained practitioners. The Architects Registration Acts of 1931-1969 restricted the title 'architect' to those so qualified. Of course, qualification cannot ensure imaginative architectural thinking, nor can lack of training ensure good architectural thoughts. What is extraordinary is that anyone writing for a serious national paper could postulate such an ingenuous

MADAME BLAVATSKY

INCOMPARABLE GENIUS OR DESPICABLE FRAUD?

The only way to resolve this problem is to read *her* works for oneself, and not what others, unable or unwilling to study and comprehend her monumental works, have said and written. If you are interested in discovering a philosophy, worthy of the highest intellect, embracing all religion and philosophy, and much science, we suggest you write for a reading list to:

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proposition. To suggest that *all* qualified architects are wreckers and that there is virtually no good modern architecture is absurd. Such blanket criticism of any group of people cannot be true. If the art critic of your paper were so narrow as to write that there had been no good art since the impressionists and that only amateur artists were of consequence, your readers would be inclined to go elsewhere for good art criticism, which is what they will have to do to find a broad and measured view of architecture.

Deputy headmaster

John Bradbrook, London N1

It was surprising to read in your editorial (*NS* 19 August) that you would prefer Roy Hattersley to Michael Meacher as the next deputy leader of the Labour Party.

Neil Kinnock represents the centre ground of the present day Labour Party, which is one reason why he has such widespread support in all sections of the movement. Roy Hattersley represents the old Right, the Gaitskellite tradition, despite his radical protestations. Michael Meacher represents Labour's new left, the inside loyalist left of, say, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, and not the rather doubtful 'converts' from the 57 varieties of Trotskyism.

If Hattersley were to get the deputy position, this would mean *either* a leader and deputy leader always publicly at odds because of the wide political gap between Kinnock and Hattersley (which would not be exactly good for the image of the party) *or* Hattersley would encourage Kinnock to side always with the 'sensible moderates' against the left. The Kinnock-Hattersley leadership would become an open target for the left. Hattersley would be repeatedly challenged every year for the deputy leadership in a series of action replays of 1981. Neil Kinnock would then be in an impossible position, as he would lose friends whatever he did, especially if he tried to sit on the fence.

It would be much better from every point of view if Michael Meacher were elected deputy. He would make a loyal, honest, competent and conscientious deputy leader. He is, after all, the epitome of decency, sincerity and common sense, rather like the archetypal liberal headmaster of an inner city comprehensive school.

What is more, a Kinnock-Meacher leadership would be a recognition of the shift to the left which has taken place and is still taking place in the mainstream of the party. The Labour Right, which is historically a declining force anyway, would either have to adapt to the new majority, or, if they really want to defect, they should do so. It would certainly clarify the political situation. It would be absurd to allow such blackmail to influence Labour's choice of deputy leader.

All in all, if you value Neil Kinnock's job security as the next leader of the Labour Party then vote for Michael Meacher as deputy leader.

Employers' breach of contract

Mark Benney, London EC4

The explanation for the helplessness of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association in the face of dishonoured national agreements (*NS* 19 August) in fact lies in s18 of the 1974 Trade Union Labour Relations Act. This was the legislation enacted by the new Labour government to replace the disastrous 1971 Act. Whereas the latter said that collective agreements would be presumed to have been intended as legally binding, this was reversed by TULRA.

It is true that the courts will not grant specific performance of employment contracts, but only in as much as to do so would be to enjoin the continuance of a contract for personal services. Specific terms and conditions can still be the subject of an action for breach of contract, provided they have been 'incorporated' into the workers' individual contracts.

It is therefore open to individual aggrieved members of the unions to sue the employers for breach of contract, with financial support from their organisations. In each case, one individual could bring what is known as a 'representative action' for damages and, more importantly, a declaration that the employers have acted in breach of contract. The effect would be to establish the legal right of all the affected employees.

This is not to deny that the inevitable and most effective response to such arbitrary action will usually be industrial action. But, in the present climate, the existence of sound legal remedies should never be overlooked.

For the record

Wolfgang Rüdig, Dept of Liberal Studies in Science, Manchester University

I was dismayed by some of the editorial changes which you made to my article on the Ecology Party (*NS* 5 August). As someone who is not a native speaker of English, I appreciate that some rewording may have been necessary, and perhaps also some shortening. Unfortunately, this process has led to one serious distortion of my original writing in the passage dealing with Edward Goldsmith's influence on the Ecology Party before 1975. While in my original article I only report charges of 'eco-fascism' being made in the early 1970s, the passage published by the *New Statesman* creates the false impression that I personally endorse these charges. This distortion is particularly serious in conjunction with the illustration of the article by Edward Goldsmith's picture being presented as 'an image of eco-fascism'. This is personally offensive and factually wrong. I would like to make it totally clear that I am not responsible for the parts of the published article which contain charges of 'eco-fascism', and that I strongly disagree with such an interpretation of Edward Goldsmith's work.

Labour votes and the Alliance

William Wallace, London SW17

Bernard Crick's analysis of the Labour Party's defeat (*NS* 12 August) comes close to assuming that the Labour Party lost votes directly to the Alliance – and that it is from the Alliance that it must therefore regain them.

My own experience as a Liberal candidate in the June 1983 election campaign (which is confirmed by a number of more expert analysts), is that a much more complicated process of electoral adjustment is under way. The Alliance won a considerable number of votes from the Conservatives among the 'concerned middle classes'. On the council estates, a great many votes went straight from Labour to the Conservatives – votes which we had hoped to gain, but which were strongly attracted by the nationalist and materialist appeal of the Conservative government.

I doubt if the 'hard-hat' vote which Labour is now losing is likely to be regained either by the Alliance or by the Labour Party. One of the Labour Party's problems over the last 20 years has been that, in reality, the trade unions which represent the better paid working classes have been conservative, wishing to defend their status and pay scales against those below them and to preserve what privileges they felt they had. In the United States, they have become a significant part of the core Republican vote.

If we want to reconstruct a progressive coalition in British politics, it has got to be reconstructed on a new basis. The idea that Labour can 'regain' the working-class vote ignores demographic, social and economic change.

Look, no hands

Steve Potter, Acting National Secretary, Socialist League

John Salmon's piece on the Cowley victimisations was completely marred by its juxtaposition to John Rentoul's ill-informed witch- hunting piece on CND and the Socialist League. (*NS* 19 August). We are for building the strongest possible CND movement open to all political currents. We are categorically opposed to any current, including our own, organisationally manipulating the movement.

Rentoul makes a series of incredible charges. We deny any manipulation in CND, including at the Labour Movement Conference Against the Missiles in 1981. He says the Socialist League produced a delegates' briefing on the issues we wanted to take up at the conference. Certainly we did – as do dozens of other political viewpoints at that and other conferences. Is it now a violation of democracy to try to get people to agree with you or give those supporting your positions material to make sure they have as many arguments, information and facts as possible to use in their speeches?

The charge of Rentoul's article that the growth of Labour CND and Youth CND was a sure sign of its 'manipulation' is a catch 22 argument. Usually witch- hunters charge that Marxists are 'taking over empty shell labour bodies'. Now it seems that they are showing manipulation by persuading people to join them in larger numbers! *Of course* we try to get people to join YCND, or Labour CND, or national CND. Youth CND in Oxford grew massively because it organised a 200-strong march to Greenham Common and signed up 300 people to go to the National Rock the Bomb festival. A lot of people joined Oxford YCND as a result. Is this a further example of 'manipulation'?

If Rentoul or the *New Statesman* has some real evidence of inventing non-existent members, or rigging of votes, please come forward with it. As such methods are typically used against the left wing by the right we have as much interest in exposing them as anyone. Rentoul simply wants to mix up arguing for our political positions – which we certainly do – with organisational swindles – which we categorically deny.

There is a major debate about orientation going on in CND. We think the *New Statesman* would do better to argue its positions politically than repeat the type of material that habitually appears in the *Sun*.

Stockings and slips

C. P. Macnaughton, Edinburgh

Please draw to the attention of Sue Townsend (Diary 5 August) the fact that nylon stockings were not known in this country in 1940 (when M. H. Roberts was 14¼). Lady Olga Wasteland had no need, therefore, to lament their disappearance from the shops.

'Nylons' did not come to this country until a few years later, initially brought in by US servicemen.

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Michael Schmidt

The Prudence Farmer Award

Each year the New Statesman *bestows an award of £100 upon the author of the best poem, in the judge's opinion, to have appeared in our pages during the previous twelve months. This year's judge was MICHAEL SCHMIDT, who has chosen 'Bless The Bed That I Lie On' by Alistair Elliot, published in the issue of 24 June 1983 and here reprinted.*

THE NICEST THING about reading for the Prudence Farmer Award is that you are not judging poems submitted for a prize, but the weekly choices of a discriminating editor. In recent years I have come to think that only poems not written for prizes ought to win them. Prudence Farmer in her wisdom established a precedent in Britain (already common among American periodicals) which I wish others would follow. But the Poetry Competition is now an established method of fund-raising, a Parnassian lottery. The Prudence Farmer Award remains a remarkably pure and modest little honour. Several winning poems have become anthology pieces. It was here that James Fenton invented the Martian School back in 1978. Valentine Cunningham in 1976 and Ian Hamilton in 1979 offered penetrating characterisations of the periodical poetry of their years.

Nowadays, I suppose the most common genres of poetry are prize poems and periodical poems. The *New Statesman*, in common with two or three other weekly journals, has given the latter genre greater scope than in the past by allowing it more space, more air, and even taking on board longer poems, sequences and groups. The 'filler poem' is not so common as it was. I'm also impressed by the number of relatively new poets published in recent months, along with foreign poetry and poetry in translation. The native work is put into perspective.

But it is the native work that most concerns me. I am struck by how many poems set out to make the best – even if the best is only a joke – of being snared in that world of contingencies that Donald Davie describes as the inevitable sphere in which the heirs of Hardy are free – or doomed – to move. The urban and suburban 1980s, thoroughly secular, are the common ground, and even when the poet moves abroad, he is not extended. There is an imaginative inadequacy, which is a moral inadequacy, in the (to me) most disturbing poem published in the *NS* this year, Harry Clifton's 'Monsoon Girl'. Set beside the stunning short poem by the American Carolyn Forché, 'The Visitor' (about recent experiences in Central America), which stands comparison with James Fenton's fine Cambodian pieces, Clifton's poem epitomises the characteristic British Tone Abroad: resigned, troubled, a little mawkish, exploitative; yet eloquent too, *resourcefully* inadequate.

The common language now is more frequently that of prose than that of speech or song. The poet is – like other mortals – caged, and wonders if the cage can be made tolerable. Certainly few of the poems (Michael Hofmann's are enigmatic exceptions) suggest that it is intolerable. Acceptance, rueful and reluctant for the most part, is a keynote. It is a tone more British than Georgianism ever was, a tone of defeat, reductive because reduced; for most, the prophylactic of irony is no longer serviceable. The strains of Larkin which young poets echoed ten and five years ago hardly sound in these pieces. There is word-play, bold humour, anecdote, striking metaphor; but all contribute to what is in the end a curiously oblique poetry, quietistic, accepting. It is as though the painfully-earned truth of Cavafy's 'There is no ship to take you from yourself' had become an untried axiom rather than a desolate conclusion after long struggle. Those poets who play most strenuously with anecdote, with metaphor, manage at their best to entertain. I liked John Mole's 'A Sunday Painter' and Duncan Forbes's witty 'The Other Woman' ('I may as well reveal/That I dreamt up the setting') because they came clean about this with considerable technical dexterity. In 'Dark Ages' Christopher Reid adroitly marries the wind-tousled city-scape to a matrix of medieval imagery, but the poem chooses to go no further than conceit. Paul Groves strikes the keynote in 'The Suffering': 'Your life is the same/as yesterday – boring, without a hitch.' Then there is 'September Bulletin' by Simon Rae. He passes through the kind of landscape where I live and, looking through the train window, misses quite a lot. He sees 'allotments . . . busy with the unemployed, while/behind the high

Alistair Elliot

Bless the bed that I lie on

(i.m. Marion Elliot, née Margaret Stewart; Drumbeg, 1859 – Lochmore, 1955)

The history of this blanket's partly known:
You made it – starting not from yarn but wool
Sheared perhaps from a known sheep in Glencoul,
And lichen, from the ultrabasic stone.

But is it older than your grandson? – made
Before your blindness, when you were a wife,
In the middle of your long pseudonymous life?
Or in my teens, when you were half a shade?

Is it your photograph I recall, or you,
In black against a white wall in the sun
Turning your wheel?

I'd like to think you spun
And dyed and wove my blanket in Glendhu,
Still in the drystone park like paradise
In summer

– even that it kept you warm
That night beside your husband's mortal form,
Waiting together for the sun to rise.

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walls of desirable properties/gardeners of pensionable age/stoke the smoking armpits of bonfires.' It is hardly surprising that, when perceptions are stereotyped (even if decorated with ill-assorted metaphor), the ideas that follow from them are stereotyped as well; imagination works with rather more *lived* particulars. One might expect from it, too, a greater formal inventiveness than is present in many of the poems from this year's harvest.

Seamus Heaney's 'An Ulster Twilight' is a treat. The last stanza has a remote and haunting echo of Frost and suggests the possibility for Heaney of a way back from Lowell to a world in which he is temperamentally more at home. Fleur Adcock's 'The Chiffonier' – technically a little mechanical in its deployment of couplets – is refreshing in the way it entirely escapes the tone I have tried to characterise here. And I also have Craig Raine's 'Arsehole' in my portfolio.

Stewart Conn's 'Turn of Century' and William Scammell's 'The Making of *Modern Love*' both tempted me. They're technically interesting and they illuminate, a little essayistically, their subjects. Tom Paulin makes a fine short poem out of Mayakovsky in 'Last Statement', and in more personalised ways the poems of Paul Groves and P.J. Kavanagh (redolent in 'Dark Dawn' of the other P. Kavanagh) attracted me. So did the precisely evocative miniature by Ruth Fainlight, 'Silk Kimonos', and the extremely poised poems by Carol Rumens and (more expansively) Alison Brackenbury.

But I have no hesitation in choosing Alistair Elliot's elegy 'Bless The Bed That I Lie On' for this year's Prudence Farmer Award. Elliot is of that still-too-little-read bunch of poets – not a school, I'm afraid – that includes Tony Harrison and Rodney Pybus. This particular poem has something in common with Harrison's Meredithian sonnets from *The School of Eloquence*, but it is quieter than they are and it witnesses to a very different past, not urban but pastoral. It conjures its world almost entirely through questions, asserting nothing beyond 'I'd like to think'. Having thought, it provides an imaginative fact, an *erklärung* that pours into the present, with physical particularity and rhythmic tact, a time recovered from time. There is here a release from that narrowed, secular world of contingencies that Donald Davie speaks of. □

Among this week's contributors:

MICHAEL SCHMIDT is Managing Director of Carcanet Press; he has edited several poetry anthologies and published several volumes of his own, including *Desert of Lions, It Was My Tree* and *A Change of Affairs*.

EDMUND LEACH is Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge. He recently contributed a volume on *Social Anthropology* to the Fontana/OUP Masterguide series.

JAMES CAMPBELL is on the staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

NATIONALISM
Edmund Leach

The idea of the state

Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism
BENEDICT ANDERSON *NLB* £15 *Verso* £3.95

Readers of the paperback version who suffer my misfortune of having the binding fall apart almost before they have started or who feel that they need a magnifying glass to read the small print should battle on. They are getting good value for their money including a highly readable text, an index of names and places (no topics), a wide-ranging and erudite bibliography and, wonder of wonders, generous footnotes which come at the bottom of the page to which they refer.

Benedict Anderson is the brother of Perry of that ilk; he is Professor of Government and Asian Studies at Cornell University and a specialist on Indonesia. The illogical and bitterly hostile nationalisms of contemporary South East Asia provide his *Leitmotif*, but most of the text is concerned with other periods and other parts of the map. Indeed, whereas 19th-century developments in Latin America and the Austro-Hungarian Empire are given prominence, comparable (though converse) features of the contemporary Indonesian story are kept in the shadows. East Timor and the South Moluccas are each mentioned only once; West Irian not at all.

Anderson's personal politics are not easy to decipher. As befits a book published by NLB there is a formal presumption that the reader is some kind of Marxist; there are Marxist assumptions about what distinguishes good from evil; Marxist arguments are invoked from time to time to explain the course of historical events; but the message overall serves to emphasise how different is the post-colonial 'liberated' world from anything that the liberators might have hoped for or that the Marxists of the colonial era would have predicted.

The book starts and ends on this note: 'The Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia in December 1978 and January 1979 represented the first *large-scale conventional war* waged by one revolutionary Marxist regime against another' (p.11); 'there are small grounds for hope that the precedents they [China, Vietnam and Cambodia] have set for inter-socialist wars will not be followed' (p.146) but, in between, the incompatibility of Marxist theory and practice is not the central issue. The book is about the 'idea' of the nation state; how and where it came into being; how it is used by power-hungry politicians as a justification for their nefarious actions. It is a fascinating topic. Anderson's knowledge of a vast range of relevant historical literature is most impressive; his presentation of the gist of it both masterly and lucid. There are Marxist distortions of the evidence but they are not grave.

How then has it come about that such a very large proportion of the world's population now believe that, as individuals, they are members of a particular 'nation' which is entitled to sovereign lordship over an identifiable block of national territory ('our country') and that by virtue of this belief they feel a commitment of loyalty which is so complete that 'to die for one's country' is the greatest honour that can ever be achieved?

Tribal peoples do not have this sort of self-identifying bond which extends far and wide beyond the range of recognised kinship or the limits of any face-to-face community; the rival sovereigns of feudal Europe did not elicit this kind of loyalty. How then?

ANDERSON puts the birth of national consciousness very late. He sees it as an 18th-century phenomenon, a by-product of the propagandist use of printing by capitalist 'leaders'. He holds that the capitalist milieu was critical, though he distinguishes several different types of political context in which national leadership has been exercised. Most of his more convincing practical examples relate to national heroes who have used the power of literacy (and print) to forge a sense of local community among the populations of former provinces of worn-out polyglot empires in which loyalty had been to the 'kingdom' rather than to the 'nation'.

This became possible because there developed in the old empires 'a fatal distinction' between the inhabitants of the metropolitan centre and the 'creoles', that is to say those who spoke the language of the centre but had been born elsewhere. It was highly characteristic of 18th- and 19th-century colonial imperialism that access to high office in the administration was reserved for expatriates from the metropolis. It was the frustrated envy of the educated 'creoles' in the provinces which provided the tinder for wars of liberation against the imperial oppressors. It was creoles who became the leaders in the new nations.

Obviously I am oversimplifying Anderson's thesis, though there are many cases which fit very well even with this simplified model. Anderson draws illuminating details from the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia; it is easy to be persuaded that we have here a general rule but it calls for a somewhat myopic view of the evidence.

The awkward cases tend to get left out, especially those in which the political manipulators are not in control of events. Anderson is an Irish citizen but he skates around the complexities of Irish nationalism. Where does Basque or Croat separatism fit in? The modern nationalisms that have replaced the Ottoman hegemony are very complex but Anderson mentions only the consequences of Atatürk for political Turkey. Armenians, Palestinians, 'Pan-Arabs', Kurds are not mentioned. Zionists and Israel appear only in a three-line footnote. Yet the suicidal patriotism exhibited by the nationalist

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zealots of all these 'imagined communities' often runs directly contrary to the interest of the local political leaders whether capitalist, socialist or other.

It seems odd, too, that the city states of Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire are not treated as nations even though Rome was cited as a model by some of the inventors of 18th-century nationalism. Perhaps Anderson would say that since these ancient states were slave societies the 'nationalism' of the free citizens does not count. It is an arguable point but it might have been discussed. The war memorials which are now so characteristically used as symbols of national immortality are as likely as not inscribed with a quotation from the Latin.

Anderson makes a good point here. He argues that loyalty to one's nation 'to the death' has quite a different quality from other kinds of loyalty. The living members of a nation are not the descendants of named ancestors but rather the heirs of a nameless ghostly community of souls. It would be absurd to erect a 'Tomb of the Unknown Marxist' or a 'Cenotaph for Fallen Liberals', but such objects are prototypical of national shrines. Anderson's book is full of memorable comments of this kind.

In this regard, as in the impressive vignettes of unfamiliar episodes of history, it is reminiscent of the work of Eric Hobsbawm, an author who is frequently cited. But entrancing case histories should not be mistaken for illustrations of a general law. I suspect that there is no general law about these matters, but the generalist would certainly need to examine, much more carefully than Anderson has done, the relationship between a willingness to die for one's country (whether real or imaginary) and willingness to suffer martyrdom for one's religious faith. But if the holy wars fought in the name of Buddhism or Islam or Christianity are brought into consideration along with the role of Islam and Buddhism in the recent nationalisms of Pakistan, Malaysia, Burma and Sri Lanka, then Anderson's postulated association between the origins of modern nationalism, printing, early capitalism and the 18th-century Enlightenment becomes a good deal less convincing. All the same, this is a very stimulating book. □

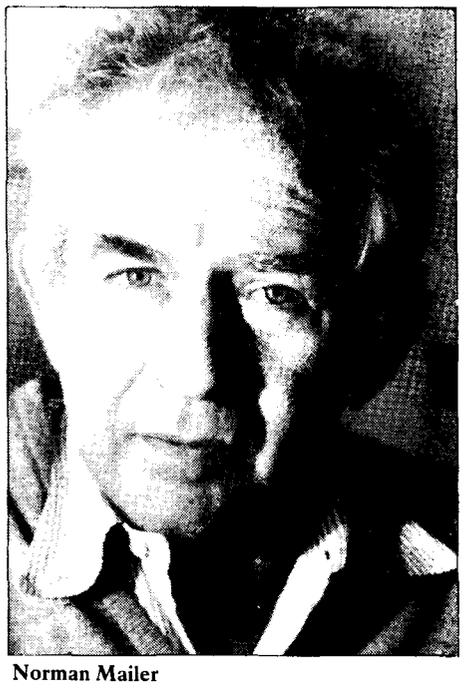
ESSAYS
James Campbell

Squaring off

Pieces and Pontifications
NORMAN MAILER *NEL* £9.95

Norman Mailer is a battlefield. In his head constant fighting takes place between essential and existential gods, darkness and light, hedonist and puritan, man and Man, consciousness and the void; on a more mundane level, the squabble is between a great writer and an overblown windbag. Mailer is about 50 per cent genius: that side of him wrote books like *The Armies of the Night* and *The Executioner's Song*, and essays such as 'King of the Hill' and, in the present book, 'Miller and Hemingway'. The other 50 per cent is show-business. It does all the stupid things – fights in the street, runs for Mayor, accumulates wives – which by now everyone knows and talks about, including millions who have never read a word he's written. In their eyes he is a macho exhibitionist and a hack.

The extraordinary thing about the 50-per cent principle is its consistency; the two Mailers function like Siamese twins, trying to co-operate but always finally coming to blows. Even a work of supreme merit, *The*



Norman Mailer

Executioner's Song, is too long by half, and one of the many remarkable features of that book is that the good completely outdoes the bad, so that hardly anyone who has read it recalls that the latter part is redundant. On the other hand, a monumental failure like his recent novel, *Ancient Evenings*, is nevertheless commodious enough to house many passages of great quality.

That two-headed creation so dear to him, the saint and the psychopath (in *Pieces and Pontifications* we are treated to the theory that Charles Manson was a very brave man), was conceived not in the cool chambers of the intellect, but deep in Mailer's own personality: 'He knew . . . that consciousness was the nihilation of Being; for his brain worked at a great rate and he felt the full dimensions of the void his consciousness was generating in his brain cage.' This assortment of essays and interviews not only shows Mailer employing once again the device which perfectly expresses his split personality, of perceiving his actions from outside his own body, but it also conforms to the model he established almost 40 years ago: it is full of great wit, eloquence, grace and mental agility, and, in equal measure, crass bull-headedness.

Take this, from 'Of a Small and Modest Malignancy', in which the two protagonists are preparing to appear on a television chat show:

> At this moment, alone in the Green Room, he felt a tender and caressing hand on the back of his neck. It was Vidal. Vidal had never touched him before, but now he had the tender smile of a man who would claim, 'It doesn't matter, old sport, what we say about each other – it's just pleasant to see an old friend . . .'
>
> Norman smiled. He leaned forward and looked pleasantly at Gore. He put his hand to the back of Gore's neck. Then he butted him hard in the head.
>
> 'Are you crazy?' asked Vidal.

On the subject of that infamous skirmish, which allegedly derived from nasty things said in print about the Man with six wives and eight children by the man with no wives and no children, here is a quote from a review of *Advertisements for Myself* which Vidal wrote in 1960: 'My first reaction to *The Naked and the Dead* was: it's a fake . . . every time I got going in the narrative I would find myself stopped cold by a set of made-up, predictable characters taken not from life but from the same novels all of us had read.'

To find out precisely which novels Vidal had in mind, now turn to *Pieces and Pontifications*, which contains a new introduction which the author wrote for a reissue of *Advertisements for Myself* in 1976: 'I did not know my métier. *The Naked and the Dead* had been written out of what I could learn from James T. Farrell and John Dos Passos with good doses of Thomas Wolfe and Tolstoy'. In short, a fake. In spite of the biting and the barking, it's good to know that old dogs can teach each other new tricks.

In the tradition of *The Presidential Papers, Cannibals and Christians, Existential Errands* (Mailer is a great stylist, but he has a fatal fondness for alliteration), *Pieces and Pontifications* contains his journalism from the Seventies (besides those already mentioned there is a sympathetic article on graffiti and a dull piece about the Watergate villains) plus interviews dating from 1960. He chose the title for this section, he explains, because what one says in an interview comes out of 'the church of one's acquired knowledge'. Mailer claims to dislike the form, although he has given hundreds of interviews and even interviewed himself. Moreover, he has chosen to reprint them in anthologies before now, which indicates that he trusts their ability to convey a sense of the vastness of his intellect.

He certainly performs brilliantly under interrogation, and the 'Pontifications' show how agile and imaginative a thinker he is. It follows naturally that it also proves him to be pretty thick at times, fond of statements like: 'William Burroughs changed the course of American literature with one sentence. He said, "I see God in my asshole in the flashbulb of orgasm".' But we should be thankful for the good 50 per cent, which by itself is large enough to dwarf most of his contemporaries – for his vision, as one of them once said, is our vision. □

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Selected Letters 1880-1903
MARCEL PROUST *Collins* £15.95

This book looks like useful fodder for those who detest Proust and his fiction. Translated by Ralph Manheim from Philip Kolb's definitive but as yet incomplete edition of his correspondence, it covers Proust's early years as an aesthete and socialite, with a great deal of leisure and a nervous asthmatic complaint. He writes in gold ink on violet paper to ladies of the nobility; he flirts with *demi-mondaine* hostesses in whom he had no genuine sexual interest. He was a tiresomely fastidious and even self-indulgent invalid; his writing was still dilettante. A flick through these pages confirms the Proust-hater's image of a lotus-eating prig, but a little closer attention brings its rewards.

First of all, Proust was a wonderful friend, passionate about the morality of friendship, sensitive, sympathetic, and loyal to the many men and women he was close to. 'In matters of friendship I'm a bourgeois, not a metaphysician', he justly writes of himself, and even his relationship with the *fin de siècle* exquisite Robert de Montesquiou (the model for both Proust's Charles and Huysmans' Esseintes) is salty and wry. Best of all are the warm and volatile letters to the composer Reynaldo Hahn, his first serious love and a lifelong confidant.

One can also trace the germination of Proust the dedicated artist. Throughout the 1890s, uncertain about his career, he laboured to translate Ruskin into French, and it is Ruskin's puritanical influence which emerges in statements like 'I have never written a line for the pleasure of writing, but only to express something that struck my heart or imagination'. And for the initiate, the letters are full of pre-echoes of the philosophy of *A la Recherche*, as he discusses 'the mysterious associations effected by our memory' and experiences all the jealousies of love.

These are not eventful letters, and a lot of space and energy is consumed in society gossip and inexplicable feuding, exacerbated by Proust's neurotic sensitivity. The pace at the beginning is often painfully slow, but by the turn of the century the increase in tension is marked, and the volume frustratingly ends with a number of dramatic outbursts. His father's death, the aftermath of the Dreyfus case, a superb and surprising defence of the Catholic church – all these were occasions to which Proust rose heroically. Read in the right spirit, these letters show an intelligence towering above the shallow decadence of the epoch. The great novelist and chronicler is not quite there yet: but one can feel him only moments away.

Rupert Christiansen

Strangehold on Africa
RENE DUMONT and MARIE-FRANCE MOTTIN *Deutsch* £14.95

Impossible to read this book without a sense of *déjà vu*. In 1961, Rene Dumont – already a distinguished French agronomist, nearing 60, and with a string of books to his credit – caused a sensation with his *False Start in Africa*. Rudely shattering the cozy euphoria of those early post-independence days, Dumont laid about him in all directions. Western governments were accused of perpetuating neo-colonialism and maldevelopment; new African elites of aiding and abetting them. This essentially populist critique and vision has altered little in the subsequent 20 years. During this time, Dumont has continued to warn and castigate widely. No respecter of persons or governments, he had a well-publicised row with Castro over his book *Is Cuba Socialist?* Any regime of left or right that ignores, exploits, underestimates or rides roughshod over its peasantry (and there are few that don't, for Dumont) is the object of his critique.

The content of the critique has changed little. This constancy is attractive, as in many ways is the critique itself. Dumont is strong (few stronger) in moral concern, and in the agrarian nitty-gritty; he is weak in theory, and in politics. Moralists as such are two a penny, but they rarely achieve Dumont's passion or his consistency. Above all, Dumont knows a lot about the practical role of agriculture, and a lot of what he says and proposes (although not all) is good plain common sense; such as his advocacy in most contexts of intermediate technology. Yet 20 years on, not only is the message still the same but it is still being ignored. Why? Most of this book is taken up with two countries, Tanzania and Zambia, which arguably have tried not to fall into the usual traps. Yet the records of both (especially the latter) are poor when it comes to tackling fundamental problems.

It is in his failure to confront the reasons for *this* failure that Dumont's limitations are most clearly visible. Here the moral concern degenerates into moralism and voluntarism, and he is reduced to avowing that 'the problem is really one of attitude' and calling on leaders to set an example. What is lacking, as ever, is a sustained analytical and political perspective. The students in Dakar whom Dumont cites as criticising him for failing to analyse 'the mechanisms of power and of the state' put their finger precisely on the problem. But it would be wrong to end on a negative note. As ever with Dumont, this book is as lively and readable as its themes are timely and sombre.

Aidan Foster-Carter

All Of Us There
POLLY DEVLIN *Weidenfeld* £7.95

Polly Devlin's memoirs take us to the Ireland of her childhood, where they depict a rural way of life that seems to have little place in the 20th century. The Ireland she writes about may now belong to a past era but it is certainly not *temps perdu* for Ms Devlin. As with most good autobiographies the memoirs are still a potent force in the writer's present life, reflected on with perceptive insight; the result falls somewhere between diary and literature. Actually this one is definitely closer to literature.

The author was one of seven children living in remote Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland, between the mysterious waters of Lough Neagh and a bleak, ugly aerodrome. Life was difficult (but not dull) for these children brought up on legends and guilt, Catholicism and myth. When, a few years later, Polly stumbles on an American Catholic school year-book, the contrast is wonderful. California, even Catholic California, looks like a planet in outer space, the young American faces shining with expectancy, consumer confidence, easy uncomplicated smiles – completely different from their Irish contemporaries reared on complexity and inhibition and dreams.

Some aspects of this strictly non-rational Irish life are brilliantly silly. The local fishermen believe that the Lough, where they fish, claims a victim every year, but they still won't learn to swim (that would tempt a personally-aimed blow from fate). One of these fishermen finally has a bathroom installed in his council flat. Ms Devlin notes his scornful response to the query, 'did he have baths in it': 'Jaysus . . . I've hardly stuck it out on the Lough for nigh on 40 years to be drownded in me own front room.'

These memoirs reassuringly fill out and authenticate an Ireland transmitted through fiction; but they also afford an inside glimpse into a country caught in its past. Ms Devlin's lyrical-analytical tale suggests that history has its parallel, on the closer personal level, in the insistent spell of early memories that won't let go.

Kathy O'Shaughnessy

The War Atlas
MICHAEL KIDRON and DAN SMITH *Heinemann* £9.95 *Pan* £5.95

The War Atlas, a Pluto Press project published by Pan and Heinemann, is a compact, versatile and politically imaginative work of reference, easier and more pleasant to consult than the pages of statistics which it condenses into graphic form. Expected information, such as national shares of world arms trade (the USSR leads, the UK comes fifth), is supplemented by less familiar, but always interesting, data: map 26, for instance, shows ratios of military to medical personnel, where Canada scores best (1:2.8) and Ethiopia worst (a staggering 122:1).

Dan Smith, one of the book's authors, spoke at a disarmament rally in Brighton a couple of days after the election. One reason CND had to go on, he said, was that we were part of a trans-Continental and trans-Atlantic movement. *The War Atlas*, by its vivid depiction of the global reach of militarism and the Cold War, valuably emphasises the need for a matching internationalism of popular resistance.

M. H. Ryle

White Law: Racism in the Police, Courts and Prisons
PAUL GORDON *Pluto* £3.95

This is a modest attempt to bring together all of the basic facts and arguments relating to the real British disease. It is unashamedly a work of synthesis and Gordon readily admits his indebtedness to other more ambitious books and specialist sources. The fact that the book doesn't yield any new insights into its subject matter doesn't mean that it should not be read by anyone with more than a passing interest in the position of black people in the British state.

Gordon's major theme is that racism is built into the institutions of the modern state and that it is used to specific ends. At the same time it creates its own problems for those in authority and forces them to cope with impossible strains and contradictions. In the author's words, '. . . racism is the means by which the state responds to crisis and in so doing divides the working class against itself'.

Gordon shows how racism is nurtured by the immigration laws of successive governments, how black people suffer from being irrationally identified as a policing problem, and how the prison system responds to the resulting distortions by a conscious policy of 'dispersal'. His treatment of the 'new racism' of the Powellites and the re-emergent theories of nation propounded by Sherman, Worsthorne and indeed Thatcher is especially informative.

If I have a reservation about the book it is that it concentrates on institutional aspects of racism to the virtual exclusion of its operation at the level of power and mass psychology. Racism is an essential building-block for fascism. It is not difficult to draw the appropriate conclusions from the discovery of racism in the very institutions of British society.

Mark Benney

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FICTION
Marion Glastonbury

Fighting talk

Self-Condemned
P. WYNDHAM LEWIS *Carcanet* £8.95
The Loser
GEORGE KONRAD *Allen Lane* £8.95

On the eve of the Second World War, Wyndham Lewis set sail for Canada where he had been born, of Anglo-American parentage, 57 years previously. His declarations of support for Hitler had marred his prospects in Europe, his hopes of lucrative transatlantic commissions for portraiture remained unfulfilled, and he languished for what seemed an eternity in a Toronto hotel-room before securing the lecturing job that enabled him to return to London as soon as the war ended. These events, significantly transmuted, form the substance of his last novel, the long-deliberated **Self-Condemned,** first published in 1954 three years before his death.

The protagonist is René Harding, a distinguished historian of French descent, who renounces fame and fortune in protest against the mediocrity of academics and the vulgarity of the age. Shunning 'the generations of Caliban' exemplified by intrusive charwomen, parasitic disciples and Marxist vicars with Croydon accents, he withdraws into colonial obscurity, only to be plagued on the voyage by philistine admirers and doomed on arrival to inhabit lodgings as ramshackle and mismanaged as the State.

The hero survives poverty and neglect (Lewis himself constantly demanded to be left alone and then reviled those who complied) but succumbs to the lure of a second career, winning the plaudits of lesser men and ignobly sacrificing his ideals to the expectations of the common herd. This moral lapse is largely induced by the frantic homesickness and eventual suicide of Harding's wife Hester – as in 'hesteria'.

The male is at risk from the taint of the female, as the Nordic is besieged by Jews and Blacks, and the intellect debased and fettered by the flesh: 'His own abnormal addiction to the sports of Venus was something he never ceased to regret.' Tormented by Hester's wilful stupidity, her tears, her vanity and her bedroom eyes, her husband perceives her death as a vindictively coercive act, 'her last effort to drag me under', a master-stroke of conjugal blackmail following the truce of exile during which, marooned and helpless, they fed the frozen pigeons together through the winter.

By his own admission, thoughts came to Lewis like punches. His pugilistic style, as Harding fulminates against 'parlour pinks' and tosses *Middlemarch* overboard,verges on apoplectic incoherence: 'Bosh, bosh, bosh, bosh! Quack, quack, quack, quack!' But the philosopher has a first-class mind and, between frenzies, discourses at length on the uncivilisable brutishness of the masses and the inevitable barbarism of democratic rule. Less the defiant outlaw; more the sententious judge.

Apologists for Wyndham Lewis have argued that, in 'planting the swastika' in England, he knew not what he did. Quite the contrary. The chief interest of his writing lies in the bared fangs of ideology, the persistence of punitive obsessions, the contortions of an unrepentant *übermensch*. His books are documents in the history of hatred. In reissuing this one with accompanying drawings and photographs, the publishers acknowledge the help of the Arts Council. Sketches of brooding female figures evoke sympathy for their original, Mrs Lewis, without lending conviction to her shadowy fictional counterpart. There is a hellish glimpse of reality too in the facsimile of six lines from the manuscript of the final chapter, scrawled after the draughtsman had gone blind.

LIKE *Self-Condemned*, George Konrad's infinitely more rewarding novel **The Loser,** traces the impact of mid-century conflict, chaos and carnage upon individual destinies. From the garden of a modern Hungarian mad-house, a 55-year-old inmate, a sceptical truth-seeker, half-Jewish and benignly sane, contemplates the vicissitudes that have jolted him in and out of danger, high office and incarceration, while cities changed hands, rulers became fugitives, and execution squads turned into rescue parties and vice versa: 'I trained thousands of young people to become revolutionaries just like me; on some I did such a good job that they became my surliest interrogators at state security headquarters.'

The professor's memory is as populous as the streets of Budapest, and his casual flow of reminiscence, pleasantly rendered here in an American translation, is in fact a constellation of life-stories ironically mingled, lyrically told: the experiences of his forebears, servants, school-mates, bed-mates, fellow partisans and patients, forced labourers, apparatchiks and university colleagues. In 1956 armed insurgents demanded to know whose side he was on. Soon afterwards, as a government official, he was deputed to deliver a note to the Russian Embassy calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. We know what happened next. But the bloody betrayal of the revolution has prompted neither cynicism nor the sort of recantation that sells well in the West. Mr T. is careful not to confuse freedom with a well-stocked department store.

The past is a murderous minefield that leaves room for no illusions. We are all, he suggests, failed experiments. But the wit and tenderness of *The Loser,* the energy, subtlety and freshness of the observer's prose, give an exhilarating lift even to expressions of despair. There's a curtain of sausages in the pantry, the scent of walnuts and lavender on the porch. For today, suicide plans can be shelved. □

THEATRE
Christopher Edwards

On the table

Macbeth
SHAKESPEARE *Barbican*
Agnes of God
JOHN PIELMEIER *Greenwich*

I disliked this production of **Macbeth** when I first saw it in Stratford; on the opening night of its transfer to London nothing happened to alter my initial impression. Cold, harsh, repressive – this is a description not of Bob Peck's Macbeth but of Howard Davies, the director, as he emerges from this very deliberately formulated production. What are you to make of a director who scrubs out any palpable sense of awe, of evil, of the supernatural? What do you say of a director who appears to have a horror of horror, who numbs instead of thrills and chills instead of moves? The directorial hand is so starkly present that you feel invited to speculate about the rest of the organism: what is he afraid of? Why won't he release the life of impassioned intellect in this, the fastest-moving of Shakespeare's tragedies? He chops up the intensity of the work until there is barely a wriggle of life left in it. All is method and dissection; he transports you into a laboratory, not to a blasted heath. *Ave* the Royal Shakespeare Clinic.

The stripped-bare, no-illusions approach is evident from the set – a platform on black poles on top of which perch two percussionists-cum-electronic-sound-merchants. Arc lamps and more black poles reinforce the sense of angular metallic glare. What creatures inhabit this stark arena? Davies has perhaps taken a cue from Mary McCarthy's remarks about Macbeth as the only Shakespeare hero who conforms to a bourgeois type. This notion has certainly gone the rounds. I remember a girl who, in her university interview, came out with a description of the play as 'about a middle-class couple trying to better themselves': she got in. Here you have Sara Kestelman's Lady Macbeth as a cool, competent murderess whose approach to the deed is characterised by the same unfussy briskness she would bring to any household chore. And when her husband won't return to Duncan's chamber with the daggers, well, she'll jolly well climb right up those stairs and do it herself. This is a plain waste, for, as she reminded us recently with her Goneril, Kestelman has the power to move and appal; here her emotional range is untapped, and the aridly unemotional tack of this production is such that her wailing at the banquet scene seems almost histrionic.

The bourgeois note sounds on through the Porter scene – actually, in his grey storeman's coat and blue beret, Geoffrey Freshwater is more of a concierge, and an

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uppity one at that. He comes on as a knowing, menacingly cheeky chappie with an insinuating 'I say I say I say' vaudeville routine. Not drunk, not funny and not credible.

And then there is Bob Peck's Macbeth. I don't think I have read a review of his performance that failed to describe him as one of nature's Enobarbuses. All I would say is that this is true, but don't forget his excellent Iago. Then I would have to say that his Macbeth is a robot. The bluff, northern soldierly persona just doesn't fit, and you actually need more than three rhetorical gestures in this part to make the great verse come alive. I found Peck's literal-minded delivery of the poetry frankly embarrassing – the more so as he had clearly plotted it all out so carefully. When his seated heart knocks at his ribs what could be more natural than to bash his trusty helmet against his breastplate? Does he have a thought, whose murder is but fantastical? Yes he does; and to remind you where it comes from he gives his head a good poke. This is declamation by numbers and I couldn't bear it any longer than the interval, which is when I left.

Nor was there much trace of the supernatural in **Agnes of God** at the Greenwich – a transfer from Broadway written by a graduate of the Catholic University of America. The opening moments held some hope. To begin with there were two graceful old Carmelite nuns sitting in front of me; then there was a beautiful sung *Kyrie Eleison*. I had heard that the play was 'about miracles' and wondered whether this implied a fair hearing. As Cardinal Newman said about the miracle of the African confessors who had their tongues cut out but still spoke as before, 'It is quite as fair to be sceptical on one side of the question as on the other'. The trouble with this play is that it is so one-sided. The premises are routinely secular; faith is a species of neurosis, like everything else in the play's psychoanalysed universe. The Mother Superior who wishes to believe that the pregnant novice in her convent is divinely innocent is herself a refugee from a 'real' world of widowhood, sadness and alienated daughters. Her faith is in Agnes, the novice, and it is in the name of Agnes that she pleads with the embittered lapsed Catholic analyst to whom the young girl is sent after the baby is found strangled and stuffed in a wastepaper bin.

I felt the play suffered from the same limitations as *Equus;* it is inherently undramatic. You are presented with a problem – was the novice impregnated, how, by whom, did she know? The rest of the work is spent unravelling this knot and the characters are given complete liberty to address the audience on the subject of their pasts. You are *told* all there is to know; nothing genuinely explorative takes place, no discovery of character is made through the dialogue. It is quiz theatre, dependent for its interest upon the spurious thrill of waiting for the puzzle to be completed. I don't see it lasting as long as it has on Broadway – despite three excellent performances from Susannah York, Honor Blackman and Hilary Reynolds. □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

Channel 5

THE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY in the Algarve refer to Portuguese television as 'Channel 5'. Holidaying there each year I have noticed a gradual changeover from Portuguese to English during the peak viewing hours. I wonder in how many other countries round the world the lucky inhabitants are regaled during dinner with *The Duchess of Duke Street, Rich Man Poor Man, Dallas, Hill Street Blues, Upstairs Downstairs* and *The Benny Hill Show?* What one gets are very early examples of these triumphs, before they got the recipe right (*Yes, Minister*) or the heroes lost their hair (*The Sweeney*). Sometimes the characters are unrecognisably youthful, well-spoken and good at acting still and the show is in black and white and flickering from over-familiarity and travelling, like old library copies of Charlie Chaplin films. Occasionally, the sound of English jarring on the mimosa-scented, cicada-filled evenings is replaced by the gentler nonsense of Japanese, mostly indoor stuff, with kneeling and suicides.

The Portuguese are hospitable, easy-going people and they will put up with almost anything in a distant sort of way, so long as it doesn't interfere with whatever else is going on. This is ensured by the illegible and erroneous sub-titles and the irrelevant subject matter of the shows, so everyone is happy. They wheel their big old sets outdoors like prams and invite the neighbours round to ignore the chaotic JR being bombarded by giant moths, while fireflies put on a more coherent show in the nearby bushes. I used to lie on my bed most evenings with mild sunstroke, vaguely trying to decipher the variations-on-a-sound-track of these imported puppet shows entering the house by every open window. Bullets ricocheted round my room. Just as I was failing to catch the drift of a *Hill Street Blues* I'd seen twice before, the whole thing would stop in mid-sentence and there'd be a 50% volume increase for 5 minutes of ads. ('Yes, me-lady; no, me-lady', says a Hudson-type person.) They get louder in England too, as I remember. Why? Is it paranoia, or to penetrate our unprofitable dreaming?

If TV is the carbo-hydrate of the arts (and it is), the practice of siphoning off the staler areas of the Series Mountain blocking the service gates at Thames and London Weekend and pushing them to privileged, non-telly-related nations must be producing the mental equivalent in them of that distressing swollen-bellied look we are so familiar with from protein-deficient parts of the world. There will come a time when Oxfam has to concern itself with bringing cultural, not nutritional relief to areas where night starvation has replaced the ordinary kind. Or will it be steel-haired American 'therapists' who corner that market?

I never liked *The Flame Trees of Thika* much in England, but it makes appropriate viewing down here in one of the last resorts of the British waited-upon classes, particularly when taken in conjunction with between-swim snatches of James Fox's *White Mischief*, the book of a story set in the same time and place, Kenya in the 1940s. Servants are cheap here also (50p an hour it has rocketed to) and the favourite sport, as in Happy Valley, is drinking and running over natives. (One buries them beside the road and has the car cleaned by another of them.) Naturally, expatriate hangovers appreciate the influx of soothing British brain-wadding and their owners record the stuff on video while they are out drinking and driving. When they come home they find to their disgust that what they have recorded is a ravishing Brazilian girl apologising for the late-running (*sic*) of *The Sweeney* or the Portuguese première of *The Tamarind Seed,* which will be coming on after the News and the arts programme from Lisbon.

One Brazilian beauty with a lop-sided

Colin Wheeler

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hairstyle laughs openly at the ruins of the timetable, as all Brazilians do at Portuguese folksiness. Another holds her graceful hands clasped facetiously next to her face, elbows on table, a religio-sexual come-on unimaginable on taboo-laden British TV. It is thus only by accident that your foreign resident catches a glimpse of the Interior, as it were, the Heart of Darkness from which occasionally an obscure but indigenous culture briefly raises it head, usually in place of Dennis Waterman's (*circa* 1968).

'Extraordinary', they murmur, as two young performance artists go through a violent but inscrutable pantomime with sticks and masks or a fisherman sings *fado*. They put their videos on fast-forward and happily the tapes are long enough to accommodate such aberrations in the schedule. After the performance art, a slimline John Thaw and Dennis Waterman emerge from a strange, pre-flared-trousers, *ciné-noir* phase of their art and proceed to beat up some violent but inscrutable young men with sticks and masks.

One notices another kind of patronage. Last year Bryan Ferry hit Portugal on one of his occasional tax-gathering tours of the fans. This year Rod Stewart passed through on a similar exercise, giving us the sensation of being on slow-backwards, particularly when Rod appeared on *Vivamusica* (the Portuguese TOTP) alongside acid rockers Uriah Heep, who presumably make a living wherever the 60s are currently drawing to a close. The man who interviewed Rod caught the spirit of the occasion by concentrating his question on the 1966 World Cup, a subject still uppermost in the singer's mind. 'Portugal were unlucky to be beaten by England', Rod thought, 'and England were lucky to win.' The interviewer seemed relieved about this. Asked about the concert, Rod was on auto-cue: 'I thought the audience was one of the best crowds we've had in this part of the world.' I felt strongly that I wasn't supposed to be watching. □

MUSIC
Andrew Clements

Set spinning

Maxwell Davies: Sinfonia Concertante
Lumsdaine: Hagoromo
Albert Hall/Radio 3

No apologies for beginning yet another column with Peter Maxwell Davies, for his new **Sinfonia Concertante** is one of his most remarkable and accessible works of recent years. The Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields commissioned it and planned to give the première in New York as part of the 'Britain Salutes New York' festivities last April. But the Academy's trip was cancelled and the Proms took over the first performance, conducted by Neville Marriner. Davies was asked to write a work for chamber orchestra, and responded with a revival of the 18th-century *sinfonia concertante* concept: a group of five *concertante* soloists – flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon and horn – is pitted against an orchestra of strings and timpani.

But any suggestion of neo-classicism in the conventional sense is swept aside, save for the complete lucidity of the writing and the elegant proportioning of the structure. Davies sets himself a new compositional task by writing for an ensemble of such plain tone colours. He has worked with chamber orchestras before, in the early *Sinfonia* (1962) and the virtuosic *A Mirror of Whitening Light* (1977). The first is concerned very much with procedure and technique; the sound of the score is secondary. The second is one of his most glittering, sumptuous creations, permeated by the tuned percussion that more than anything else characterises his Orkney period. The absence of that halo of percussion – the bells and marimbas – is the most striking aspect of the *Sinfonia Concertante*; even the timpani are important more for their melodic and harmonic qualities than as a source of new colour.

Felicities of orchestration still abound in the score. The five soloists work as a team, as individuals, and enmeshed in the orchestral texture, but most often are set spinning on long swirling melodic lines, taking turns to hold the spotlight. The finale is most extraordinary in this respect, its momentum accrued from ever more excited solos after its tempo is established by a timpani solo. But the first movement, a sonata form preceded by a slow introduction, is a terse, tightly argued construction, and the central Andantino, static, essentially lyrical, is one of Davies's most poetic abstractions.

For yet another significant departure in this is its freedom from explicit programme. Nearly all of Davies's recent orchestral music has carried with it some kind of extra-musical image; here, though, is an essay in pure thought, even if the *Sinfonia Concertante* is intended as the first panel in a trip-

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FESTIVAL FOR CHILE
Saturday 3 September 1983
INTI-ILLIMANI
JOHN WILLIAMS
DANIEL VIGLIETTI · PEGGY ASHCROFT
SUSAN FLEETWOOD · JOE MELIA
Royal Festival Hall 7.30pm
Ticket prices: £2.20, £3.30, £4.40, £5.50, £6.50 and £7.50
FRANKIE ARMSTRONG · ROY BAILEY
LEON ROSSELSON · DANIEL VIGLIETTI
THE CO-OPERATION with JONATHAN COHEN
Purcell Room 2.30pm
Ticket prices: £1.50, £2.50, £3.50
In the foyers and on the concourse:
an exhibition of the banners of JOHN DUGGER, Latin-American music and crafts, records, exhibitions, books etc.
Tickets available from
the Royal Festival Hall Box Office 928 3191
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tych of works for chamber orchestra (the second, already written, includes a tenor voice). If the two symphonies (a third is promised) have been the most conclusive demonstration of Davies's powers as an orchestral composer and of his confidence to handle such resources, the *Sinfonia Concertante* signals a different kind of certainty. Davies can now demonstrate his ability to hold the listener through the quality of his invention alone; his language is secure and consistent, his handling of it faultless. Such deceptively simple accomplishments are fairly rare qualities among contemporary composers, which is not to devalue those who do not have them. Davies can now indulge a talent which is classical in the best sense, and a work which carries the most characteristically rococo of titles is as good a place as any in which to announce it.

David Lumsdaine's **Hagoromo** has also been the victim of a delayed première.It was commissioned by the BBC to celebrate the opening of IRCAM in Paris in 1977 and the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Boulez played it then. The British première was scheduled for the 1980 Proms and it was one of the victims of the Musicians' Union strike that year, and only now have amends been made; the BBC Symphony this time was conducted by Elgar Howorth.

There's no doubt that *Hagoromo* is a major piece in Lumsdaine's output; it's an evocation of a Japanese *Noh* play, depicting a series of images from it – 'a feathered robe, a wild spring garden, a dance, an act of grace, the folds of time'. The recipe is exotic, and so is much of the music of the half-hour work. But whether the inspiration is substantial enough to support such a massive structure is less certain. There are certainly *longueurs*, even allowing for the fact that any work based on such ritualistic drama must build an element of timelessness into itself.

The sound-world is undeniably attractive, filled with chiming percussion and exquisitely terraced orchestration, but the work lacks cumulative power. Lumsdaine's earlier music was notable for its solidity and crystalline structure; in *Hagoromo*, too many of those hard edges have been dissolved away. Somewhere it has all gone soft; he may win new admirers for the fastidiousness of his scoring but he does so at a cost. *Hagoromo* offers a pleasant enough ride, provided you do not care whether you travel anywhere significant in the process. □

FILMS
Alan Brien

Refusing to mix

Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence (15)
Various ABCs; Camden Plaza
The Lords of Discipline (15)
Plaza
Blue Thunder (15)
Warner; Classics Haymarket & Oxford St

Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence is the first ever Japanese-British co-production, designed to demonstrate how, in a Java prisoner-of-war camp towards the end of 1942, the two apparently alien and opposed cultures first clash, then interpenetrate, finally becoming mirror images of each other, still noticeably different but reflecting similar images of men at war.

It brings together director Nagisa Oshima, the most radical of Japan's independent film-makers, whose *Ai No Corrida* gained him international fame as the master of doomed eroticism, with four leading performers, two from each country. Pop-star, and now frequently stage and screen actor, David Bowie, alongside Tom Conti, whose spirited intelligence has enlivened many an egg-head comedy, play the Allied captives. Pop-star and composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, in his first dramatic role, and Takeshi, former Tokyo stand-up comic turned satirical TV entertainer, are their Asian captors.

This dangerously volatile mix ought to leave us shaken, if not stirred. A pity then that the resulting cocktail obstinately refuses to stay together, as each ingredient seeks its separate level – three parts Japanese tragic morality play, full of samurai rituals and sacred ceremonies, impassive displays of warrior honour interspersed with thuggish bouts of beating and kicking, and one part traditional British war-time POW adventure story with the senior officers at loggerheads over their attitude to their alien guards, and the starveling sick in the ramshackle sick-bay gamely singing out their favourite food and drink, instead of names, at roll-call.

Oshima's directorial style seems to leave him oddly uninvolved, with its long pans ending in a lingering close-up, or static tableaux of symmetrical groupings. The performances are usually expert and alive, but again strangely compartmentalised in their individual boxes.

Bowie, as the New Zealand guerrilla fighter with a mysterious betrayal in his past, makes the most of his extraordinary looks, that scraped-back skin over the cheekbones, the long, snaily neck, the vanilla hair like an unrinsed paint-brush, more at ease in silent grace than laconic, monotone speech. (Admittedly, the dialogue by Oshima and Paul Mayersberg presents some problems, as in Bowie's confession, battered and waiting execution, that 'the war came to me as an inexplicable relief'.) Conti, as ever, a trifle too chirpily irrepressible whatever his sufferings, his face always appearing perched on his shoulders like Long John Silver's parrot, nevertheless convinces as the Japanese-speaking intellectual, dedicated to translating ideas as well as phrases. But somehow Sakamoto, as the vulnerable, tense, reluctantly impressed commandant, handsome as any Hollywood screen idol, and his chunky, boozing sergeant, Takeshi, flickering from buddy to bastard at the twitch of an eye-lid, come closer to what seems intended as the heart of this confusingly, and erratically, pulsing epic.

When there is an attempt to interpret one culture to another (Conti explaining that the Japanese have no individuality but are a 'nation of anxious people who went mad *en masse*') it turns out to be not only banal, dubious but contradicted by what is shown on the screen. If anything, the CO and his NCO seem too motivated by personal whims and sudden impulses, signing and cancelling death warrants almost at random. The film's title comes from the sergeant's drunken impersonation of Santa Claus, when he frees Bowie and Conti from the condemned cell as a holiday treat for himself – an unauthorised action that would have him court-martialled even in our Army.

Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence leaves us as ill-informed about the motives of the four main characters as they are about each other. And the flash-back purporting to elucidate Bowie's heroic indomitability can only be described as a disaster – a grotesque, sentimental and rather creepy anecdote.

Anyone needing some guidance about how ordinary, bright, decent young men could be processed into sadistic bullies and obedient victims in the name of patriotism, should enrol themselves for a session with **The Lords of Discipline.** If you can picture Tom Brown's Rugby taken over by the SS, you will still be unprepared for English director Franc Roddam's term in a Carolina Military Academy.

The routine brutality not only permitted but encouraged by the staff is appalling enough, but soon appears rather tender-hearted when compared with racist tortures and snobby violence inflicted by the secret society of The Ten – electrodes on the genitals, matches lit beside petrol-soaked heads. To protect us from going insane, the film sets itself in 1964, and, of course, as in all good tales of hell in a closed community, the Tom Brown of the time (David Keith) defeats the officially-backed gang of élite psychopaths. But it is a near thing.

John Badham's **Blue Thunder** also paints an unnerving picture of an America honeycombed with government-backed, neo-fascist cabals. This time it is a secret-service agency stirring up riots in the Hispanic barrios to justify the Government's development of a monster helicopter, armour-plated and packing the firepower to devastate cities, able to tap telephones, spy through windows, and check your dossier on the computer, before blowing you away. There is plenty of aerial excitement, but little for the stars to do on the ground. □

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WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2785 **Set by Robin Chase**

Clerihews, please, about British (or Irish) counties, American states, Canadian provinces, or whatever. By 9 Sept.

No 2782 **Set by Naomi Marks**

Blood-and-thunder versions of plays.

Report **By Amazing Grace**

Not one of the great comps. Still, I liked N. J. Warburton's brisk Hamlet and Martin Fagg's knockabout Ibsen. Wellingtons plus two all round.

Ghost: If thou didst ever thy dear father love –
Hamlet: O God!
Ghost: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
Hamlet: Murder! Right, where is he, the scheming bastard?
Horatio: *(restraining him)* Don't you think you ought to give this one a little more thought, old man?
Hamlet: Thought? What is there to think about?
Horatio: Well, it is a matter of life and death . . .
Hamlet: So?
Horatio: It takes some pondering, you know. To be or not to be – that is the question.
Audience: Oh no it isn't!
Horatio: Oh yes it is!!
(Enter Claudius on tip-toe.)
Audience: Look out! He's behind you!
(After a chase round the auditorium Hamlet kills Claudius.)

N. J. WARBURTON

Mrs Alving: Spare him, Oswald! He is . . . your father!
Oswald: *What!* This canon of corruption, this pastor of putrefaction!?
Manders: Do not think too hardly of me, my son. Ah, how sweetly literal now those words – my son indeed – fruit of my loins, spawn of my groin. Kiss me, Oswald.
(Oswald kicks him. Manders falls, weeps and appears to pray, but surreptitiously swigs aquavit.)
Oswald: I spurn your offer of a 20% holding in 'The Captain Alving Orphanage'. 'Orphanage' forsooth! A noxious Norse knocking-shop, a sink of sex and smorgasbrod. Regina and I leave for Oslo tonight.
Manders: No, dear boy, *no*! She is . . . your sister!
(Engstrand enters, miraculously sober – Manders has nicked his schnapps. He carries the dripping form of Regina, who has dunked herself, fatally, in the fjord.)
Oswald: Dead! Dead! And never called me brother!

MARTIN FAGG

Lady Bracknell: I thought you said this was Bunbury's place?
L.G.: Did I? It's my pad now. He's gone – I think.
Jack: L.G. shared it with the Bunburyists; they were a kind of conspiracy.
Lady B: A conspiracy! What's this, L.G.? You belong to one of these left-wing revolutionary groups?
L.G.: It's not like that *(the sound of an explosion comes from the kitchen)* Stay here – all of you!
(He reappears, face blackened. A dramatic silence.)
Lady B: Tell us the worst! Is it your friend or the gas stove?
L.G.: I've killed him; he's exploded!
Cicely: Oh, poor Bunbury! Dead and never called me Sissy.
Lady B: We must phone the police immediately. What have you done with the body?
L.G.: There isn't one.
Lady B: What, no *corpus delicti*? You haven't hidden him in a handbag, have you?

P. W. R. FOOT

FIRST PERSON

Bill Greenwell

Three toads erect

THE NAME YOU SEE perched above this piece may seem to you pretty straightforward. Run-of-the-mill. Common-or-garden. Three simple syllables, what's the problem? You don't know the half. Take the forename. And while you're polishing your eyeballs on it, I address myself to the umpteen Bills, the billions who rejoice in this particular moniker. We are, are we not, boys, forever in the headlines. 'Bill to boost employment.' 'Bill shouted down.' 'Bill lost at first reading.' And so on. We Bills are bonded together at birth, victims of the witty snippet posted by jesting colleagues, a plethora of cutting cuttings. 'Bill to reduce sentences' (that'll be the day!); 'Bill withdrawn by Tories'; 'Bill killed.'

But Bills are in other bother too, and here I address every Tom and Harry of you, not Dick, since he's got problems of his own. Fact is, we are officially Williams. In my case, I am officially Thomas William. This five-generation family quirk, by which eldest sons of the Greenwell clan – God help me, there is one, too, in the States! – are anointed with a redundant Thomas but known by their *second* name, simply doubles the trouble. Example. I answer to Bill, am printed as Bill. Cheque duly arrives for Bill, Bill bolts for the bank. And there, week in, week out, hears these cursed words: 'Excuse me, sir, this cheque is made out to Bill, but your account is in the name of Thomas Wi . . .' 'Bill is short for William.' I've said this a thousand times, and a thousand times through the little window lips have pursed, lifting a simple fraction – decimal? – for a dubious 'Ah.'

Still, official documents are fun. And colourful too. My driving licence, for instance, is green. Should you too possess one, yours probably approximates to mine in this respect. For several years, however, I puzzled over the bureaucratic nonsense which double-checked the special hue of the paper asserting my right to travel at up to 70 m.p.h. For there, in a box apparently printed for this pointless purpose, you will find on my licence the description 'GREEN'. *Obviously* it's green! When the little bird popped up to my ear, whispering the reason for Swansea's seeming stupidity, my face was a busted flush.

There are, it's true, those dandy handbooks which spell out the origins of surnames, and which insist that Greenwell is from Green, as in grass is more so on the other side, and Well, as in wishing. My grandfather was not a party to this prose. His rummaging in parish registers and sundry records led to him to the tentatively definite assertion that it derived from *grenouille*, and was not some improbable portmanteau foisted on an off-colour drawer of water in the middle ages. My surname, in fact, is nothing less than a contradiction in colloquial terms: it is French for a frog.

Shrugging aside the implication that I am of amphibian origin, I now hop across to the reason we brand our Frankish fellow-marketeers with such reptilian abuse. Answer: *because they were toads*. This is confusing, I know, but let me pause before sorting it out for you, to observe that I may have had a lucky break here. The French for toad is *crapaud*.

It turns out that, turn to Mr Brewer for proof, the heraldic device of your French king of yore was 'three toads erect', settle down, not to mention 'saltant'. Indeed, this slithery trio is responsible, so says Guillim, that's French for Bill, I bet, in 1611, for the fact that there are three *fleurs* in the *fleur-de-lis*. But somewhere in the mists of history, the toads went down the national 'chute, or rather, were transfrogrified. And the hapless burghers of Paris, in those days literally something of a swamp, were tagged, doubtless by some impish punster, *grenouilles*. The phrase 'Qu'en disent les grenouilles?' reportedly rang round the corridors of Versailles in 1791, i.e. what are the old stick-in-the-muds up to now? And about the same time, so says the indefatigable Partridge, the louts of London tripled the turpitude by bad mouthing their cross-Channel chums as 'frog-eaters'. The French were now Frogs, the *grenouilles* were legless (if they had any sense), the *crapauds* were croaking up with laughter, and the meaner Greenwells were pretending they descended from reliable, rural stock and were once big in buckets.

A propos of nothing at all, I offer a little light relief. Were I to fulfil my desire, mentioned a while ago in these columns, of editing *The Oxford Books of Frogs*, I should give prominence to a poem by Stevie Smith. There is something about the opening to her charming 'The Frog Prince', oh I don't know, some *je ne sais quoi*. I bet she didn't know the half either:

I am a frog
I live under a spell
I live at the bottom
Of a green well.

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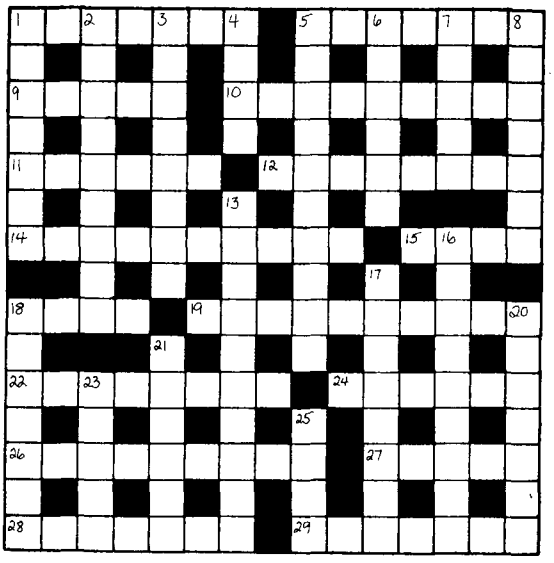
Weekend Crossword 1412

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1412, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 6 September.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

ACROSS

1. Arrived with a set in Arthur's place (7)
5. Humours a little maiden appearing in the news (7)
9. Phones although these show they are engaged (5)
10. Quiet citizen becomes national leader (9)
11. Require the French for something sharp (6)
12. The base lead pets astray (8)
14. In bad weather welcomes mountain book (10)
15. Dressed in mid second-century fashion (4)
18. Paper boy? (4)
19. Old relic gets agitated about single bird (10)
22. Open with relative beginning (8)
24. Cloth used for the backing to make a cap last (6)
26. Pure atoms are split but its victims are small animals (9)
27. Tiny letters? (5)
28. Cry which gives the score to red leader (7)
29. Gambled to show the colour of one's money? (7)

DOWN

1. Ancient place which is not rich in ruins (7)
2. Guy gives girl a call at Minehead (9)
3. Unenergetic and so losing the record? (8)
4. Notice rising leaders? (4)
5. Promotion before working (10)
6. Males about to help female (6)
7. Occurrence which took place in the seventies (5)
8. Made one's home and died near a place in Yorkshire (7)
13. Place which is no calmer to upset (5,5)
16. Town which makes clan disperse and flower (9)
17. Giving birth with women's leader in attendance (8)
18. Weight in a prize encounter? (7)
20. Passed away extraordinarily pleased (7)
21. It enters this plant for speed (6)
23. Heartless waste of lucre (5)
25. Vomit in his pewter dish (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1410

M	A	S	S	E	U	S	E	■	M	A	O	I	S	T
A	■	L	■	L	■	A	■	S	■	V	■	L	■	O
T	R	A	C	E	■	G	A	T	H	E	R	I	N	G
I	■	U	■	C	■	E	■	R	■	S	■	U	■	E
N	E	G	A	T	E	S	■	A	T	T	E	M	P	T
G	■	H	■	R	■	■	■	N	■	A	■	■	■	H
■	S	T	R	A	P	P	E	D	■	N	I	C	H	E
F	■	E	■	■	■	R	■	E	■	■	■	L	■	R
E	G	R	E	T	■	U	N	D	E	R	D	O	G	■
A	■	■	■	O	■	F	■	■	■	O	■	C	■	A
T	R	I	P	P	E	R	■	C	R	O	O	K	E	D
H	■	N	■	I	■	O	■	A	■	S	■	W	■	V
E	N	T	R	A	N	C	E	D	■	T	R	I	P	E
R	■	E	■	R	■	K	■	R	■	E	■	S	■	N
S	T	R	A	Y	S	■	R	E	A	R	R	E	S	T

Prizewinners to 1410

D. Dixon (Weymouth)
J. E. Roberts (Cannock)
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LISTINGS

FRI 26 AUGUST

LONDON (to 11 Sept) vigil 'No intervention in Central America' 9-7.30 daily, outside US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, W1. **Org NICA 01-226 6747 x 52.**

SIZEWELL Weekend gathering on Sizewell beach with festival, fair, meeting, demo. **Details EAAANP, 2 St Helen St, Ipswich 0473-214308.**

SAT 27 AUGUST

PORTON DOWN Picnic celebration of Life. **Contact Porton Down Action Group, Box 100, c/o 143 Charing Cross Road, London WC2 01-734 2691.**

LONDON Interested in going to China? Talks & slideshows 10.30-4.30, St Pancras Church House, Lancing St, NW1. Adm £2 non-members/£1 members. **Org SACU (Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding) 01-267 9841.**

SUN 28 AUGUST

LONDON Why are we waiting . . . for lead-free petrol? Link-up around Albert Hall, SW7 to greet delegates to World Petroleum Conf. Gather behind Albert Memorial 2.30 for 3pm at Albert Hall. **Org Campaign Against Lead in Petrol/Parents Against Lead 01-603 5778.**

WED 31 AUGUST

LONDON Rally on 3rd anniversary of Solidarnosc and 15 years since invasion of Czechoslovakia. 6pm Speakers Corner, Hyde Park. Spkrs incl former Solidarity internee. Org by groups supporting Solidarity in UK and Charter 77 Club. **Details 01-837 9464.**

THURS 1 SEPTEMBER

LIVERPOOL Thatcherism and the Welfare State. Spkr Ian Gouch. 7.30pm Leo McGree House, 39 Shaw St, L'pool 6. **Org Marxism Today/Merseyside Communist Party.**

LONDON 'Why we must freeze this winter'. Spkr Bridget Fitzgerald (UNA). 8pm Tetherdown Hall, Tetherdown, N10. Adm free. **Org Muswell Hill CND Contact J. Morley 01-889 0571.**

FORTHCOMING

2 SEPT London 'Trade Unions in Africa – The Struggle for Development'. Spkrs Ben Obua, of Nigerian Labour Congress, Carl Wright, Director of Commonwealth Trade Union Council. Chair Joan Lestor. 7.30pm Royal Commonwealth Soc, Northumberland Ave, WC2. **Org. World Development Movement 01-836 3672.**

3 SEPT Manchester Demonstration 'Our Families! Our Right!' Assemble Oxford Road, Mancunian Way (Iverpass (nr University) 2pm. **Org. Bangladesh Divided Families Campaign, c o Bangladesh Cultural Centre, Main Road, Oldham, Lancs. 061-678 4742.**

3-10 SEPT London Festival for Peace and Freedom in Latin America. Sat 3rd Purcell Room 2.30-5pm Daniel Viglietti and others. Royal Festival Hall, 7.30pm Inti Illimani, John Williams. Box Office 01-928 3191. Sun 4th Cuban Ballet. London Contemporary Dance, Holly Near, Bloomsbury Theatre 7.30pm. Tickets £4 Box Office 01-387 9629, 5th-9th National Film Theatre, 10 separate screenings of progressive Latin American films incl *Battle of Chile*. Box Office 01-928 3232. Fri 9th Caribbean Night at ULU, Malet St, 7pm Calypso, poems, reggae. Tickets £2.50. 01-272 4298. Sat 10th. All-Day Festival films, theatre, video, mime, painting, singers from El Salvador and Nicaragua, lots for children, £2 £1 unwaged at Imperial College. **Details CSC, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7 01-272 4298.**

5 SEPT London 'The origins of London gentrification 1960-1983' History Workshop Seminar. Spkrs Judith Allen, Charles Legg. 7.30pm Black Horse Pub, Rathbone Place, W1. **Org History Workshop.**

6 SEPT Blackpool 'Trade Unions and the Third World – The Struggle for Development' – TUC Congress Fringe Meeting. Spkrs incl Ben Obua, Moss Evans. 5.30pm Claremont Hotel, 270 North Promenade. **Org World Development Movement, Bedford Chambers, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8HA 01-836 3672.**

7 SEPT London Group meeting on acid rain & the establishment of a broad-based campaign. 7pm basement, 9 Poland St, W1. **Org SERA Public Health Group 01-439 3749.**

8 SEPT London Public meeting on Labour's future. Spkr Neil Kinnock. 7.30pm Civic Suite, Wandsworth Town Hall. **Org Putney Labour Party 01-788 8961.**

8-9 SEPT London Writers against nuclear weapons 24-hour reading vigil 12 noon Thurs 8th to 12 noon Fri 9th at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Sq. Readers incl James Cameron, Maureen Duffy, Gavin Ewart, Adrian Mitchell, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Emma Tennant, Jill Tweedie. **Org BARD (Book Action for Nuclear Disarmament). Details 0932-42274.**

9 SEPT London Picket of Defense Sales Organisation, Soho Sq, W1 11.45pm to highlight those being killed by arms sales. Bring own gravestone. (To coincide with Royal Navy Equipment Exhibition Portsmouth 12-16 Sept). **Org London Peace Action. Details Ann 01-633 0133 x 22 Keith 01-622 8426 (eves).**

10 SEPT London ILEA Manifesto Consultation 10-5 County Hall, SE1. Parents and students welcome to put views on educational priorities. **Details Steven Cowan, Greater London Labour Party Education Policy Working Party, 22 Damien Court, Damien Street, E1.**

12-18 SEPT Wales A celebration & challenge – a week of events for women all over Wales. Includes exhibitions in libraries & bookshops focusing on Welsh women writers. Amenities for women in leisure centres to be given prominence. **Details: Nina Davies, People and Work Unit, AUEW House, 34-38 Stow Hill, Newport, Gwent 0633-62326.**

16 SEPT London. Picket of British Aerospace Head Office, Pall Mall, W1, 12-2pm. **Org London Peace Action. Details Ann 01-633 0133 x 22/Keith 01-622 8426 (eves).**

17 SEPT London March, rally, demo for Palestine. Assemble 1.15pm Temple Gdns. National & international spkrs at Hyde Park 3pm. **Org Sabra & Shatila First Anniversary Committee. Also Glasgow** Sabra/Chatila commemorative march & rally. Assemble Blythswood Sq 12.00, march off 12.30 to Custom House Quay. PLO, labour movement spkrs. **Org West of Scotland Friends of Palestine.**

18 SEPT London. 'Leg it against the bomb' 10 mile sponsored slog for CND around Hyde Park from 11am at Holland Park, 4-5pm decorated legs comp. Find sponsors. **Forms available from CND, 11 Goodwin St, N4 3HQ Carol Freeman 01-263 0977.**

23-25 SEPT Birmingham Campaign Strategy Weekend Org West Midlands CND. St Francis Hall Birmingham University. Accommodation available (bring sleeping bag). £9 first come-first served. **Details and booking 54 Allison St, Digbeth, Birmingham. 021-632 6909.**

23-25 SEPT Sheffield International Conference: 'A Socialist Framework for Europe and Democratic Socialists in the Peave Movement' Sheffield University. **Details Rosemary Ross, 21 Connaught Road, Harpenden, Herts. 05827 5399. Org International Foundation Left Europe.**

24 SEPT Leicester 'Childbirth Today'. Michel Odent – pioneer of active birth in France. 10-12.30pm £5. **Org Leicester Active Birth Conf, 9 Cross Green, Rothley, Leicester. 0533 374285. ALSO 3pm at Ivenhoe College, Ashby.**

27 SEPT London 'Carry on helping OXFAM carry the can . . . Will YOU?' 1500 collectors needed for Oxfam London Flag Day Street Collection in aid of Disaster and Emergency Relief. **Phone 01-874 7335/01-348 4225 Oxfam, PO Box 3, 4 Replingham Rd, London SW18.**

27-29 SEPT Edinburgh Trees and the wealth of nations conf to discuss ways in which trees & forests are essential to the ecological, social & economic welfare of rural & urban Britain. Spkrs incl Dr David Bellamy, Prof Tim O'Riordan, Derek Lovejoy. Cost £20. **Org University of Edinburgh Centre for Human Ecology. Details 15 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh 8. 031-667 1011 x 6799.**

7-9 OCT Whitby Whitby Labour Party 4th Annual Weekend School 'Local Government – a Socialist perspective'. Spkrs incl David Blunkett, Bob Cryer. Cheap accommodation, creche. **Details: Sue Griffiths, 23 Anchorage Way, Whitby, N. Yorkshire YO21 1NU. 0947 605849.**

22 OCT London 'No cruise, no Trident, Freeze the arms race, Nuclear weapons are no defence'. CND demo to coincide with worldwide week of actions by the peace movement. Assemble Victoria Embankment (between Embankment & Blackfriars tubes) 11am. Transport arranged from every part of UK. **Contact your local CND or peace group for details or national CND 01-263 0977.**

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